

## **Mahathir arrives in Bangkok for two-day Thailand visit**

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**By Mohd Haikal Mohd Isa**

BANGKOK, Oct 24 (Bernama) -- Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad flew into the Don Mueang International Airport here Wednesday to begin a two-day visit to Thailand.

Dr Mahathir, who is accompanied by his wife Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, will have a packed schedule on Wednesday and Thursday.

The Prime Minister was met on arrival by Thailand's Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak.

This is Mahathir's first official visit to Thailand since making a political comeback and becoming Malaysia's seventh prime minister in May after leading the Pakatan Harapan (PH) coalition of political parties to victory in the 14th General Election (GE14).

During his previous tenure as the country's fourth prime minister, from 1981 to 2003, he made five official visits to Thailand, the last one being in 2003 when he attended the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting in Bangkok.

Later Wednesday, the 93-year-old Dr Mahathir will be accorded an official welcoming ceremony at the Government House after which he will have a restricted bilateral meeting with Thailand Prime Minister Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha at the same venue.

Both leaders will hold a joint press conference after the meeting. They are expected to issue a joint statement.

Meanwhile, Prayut's wife, Naraporn Chan-o-cha, will host Dr Siti Hasmah at a separate function at the Phitsanulok Mansion, the official residence of the Prime Minister.

In the evening, Prayut will host a dinner in honour of Dr Mahathir and Dr Siti Hasmah at the Government House, which also houses the offices of the Thailand Prime Minister and other members of the Cabinet.

On Thursday morning, Dr Mahathir is scheduled to receive a courtesy call from Tan Sri Charoen Sirivadhanabhakdi, the chairman of the TCC Group, one of Thailand's leading conglomerates.

Later, he will also hold a meeting with the Malaysia-Thailand Chamber of Commerce.

Just before noon, Dr Mahathir is scheduled to meet his longtime friend, Gen Prem Tinsulanonda, who was Thailand's prime minister from 1980 to 1988, at the latter's residence in Si Sao Thewes, Bangkok.

The 98-year-old Prem is president of the Privy Council, an influential body of advisors to King Maha Vajiralongkorn.

In the afternoon, Dr Mahathir will have lunch with the Malaysian diaspora in Thailand.

The Prime Minister will meet the Malaysian media before departing for Chulalongkorn University to attend a function on ASEAN. Thailand will assume the ASEAN chairmanship next year.

Dr Mahathir will deliver a talk on 'Malaysia-Thailand Bilateral Relations in the Context of ASEAN' before he wraps up his visit to Thailand and returns home.

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