

Mahathir arrives in Islamabad for three-day visit to Pakistan

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From Kamarul Ariffin Md Yassin

ISLAMABAD, March 21 (Bernama) -- Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad arrived here Thursday for a three-day official visit to Pakistan.

The aircraft carrying Dr Mahathir touched down at the Pakistan Air Force Nur Khan airbase in Rawalpindi at about 7.50 pm (10.50 pm Malaysian time).

Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan himself welcomed Dr Mahathir.

Also present to welcome Dr Mahathir were the country's Planning, Development and Reform Minister Makhdoom Khusro Bakhtiyar, Malaysian Deputy Foreign Minister Datuk Marzuki Yahya, Malaysian Foreign Ministry secretary-general Datuk Seri Muhammad Shahrul Ikram Yaakob and Malaysian High Commissioner to Pakistan, Ikram Mohammad Ibrahim.

A highlight of the visit is Dr Mahathir being conferred the *Nishan-e-Pakistan* or Order of Pakistan, the country's highest civilian award, by Pakistan President Dr Arif Alvi on Friday.

The Malaysian Prime Minister will also attend the Pakistan Day 2019 parade at the Shakarparian parade ground here on Saturday as the guest of honour.

Dr Mahathir will be accorded an official welcome at the Prime Minister's House on Friday morning. Dr Mahathir will be welcomed by Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan.

After that, the two prime ministers will have a four-eyed meeting, which will be followed by a delegation meeting between Malaysia and Pakistan.

Later, the two prime ministers will attend a roundtable meeting with the captains of industry of Malaysia and Pakistan at a hotel here.

The two prime ministers will also witness the symbolic groundbreaking for a Proton manufacturing assembly plant in Sindh province. They will also witness the signing of memorandums of understanding and agreement between Malaysian and Pakistan companies.

Also on Friday, Dr Mahathir will pay a courtesy call on President Arif at the Aiwan-e-Sadr Presidential Palace, where he will receive the *Nishan-e-Pakistan* award.

Dr Mahathir's visit is at the invitation of his counterpart Imran Khan to attend the Pakistan Day celebration, which is observed on March 23 every year.

This is Dr Mahathir's first visit to Pakistan since becoming Malaysia's seventh prime minister last year. When he was prime minister for the first time, from 1981 to 2003, he had visited Pakistan thrice, in 1984, 1997 and 2002.

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