

26 MAR 1997

Herzog

GERMAN PRESIDENT TO HAVE AN INSIGHT OF ISLAM IN MALAYSIA

KUALA LUMPUR, March 26 (Bernama) -- The five-day state visit by German President Prof Dr Roman Herzog here beginning on Tuesday is a tribute to Malaysia for its contributions to the Islamic world.

German ambassador to Malaysia Harald N. Nestroy said that Germany is impressed with Malaysia's role in the Islamic world.

"We regard Malaysia as a very important Islamic country and the president's visit is in fact in recognition of Malaysia's important role in the Islamic world," he told a news conference on the visit at the Goethe Institute here today.

President Herzog and his wife, Christiane Herzog, will be accompanied by 100 officials and 26 journalists during the visit to further enhance the cordial relations between the two countries.

Nestroy said that the president would be acquainted with Islamic values to be translated back home.

The president is interested to interpret the concept of tolerance as practised by Malaysia to the German public who have been living together with more than two million Turks, he said.

"We have always admired Malaysia which has adopted a way of tolerance based on Islamic values where its people of different ethnic groups and religious beliefs can live peacefully and in harmony in one country," he said.

"We realise Islam's reputation has suffered much in the eyes of the Western world as a result of terrorism activities by certain groups, but Malaysia has shown something which has opened our eyes," he added.

He said it was Germany's sincere hope that "Malaysia's way of tolerance" would be adopted and followed by other Muslim countries so that peoples of different religions and ethnic groups could live side by side without fear and suspicion.

President Herzog would be taken on a tour of the Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah's Mosque in Shah Alam and attend an inter-cultural dialogue session at the Institute of Islamic Understanding, Malaysia (Ikim) on the third day of his visit.

The president and his entourage will be accorded an official welcome at Parliament Square soon after his arrival on Tuesday afternoon.

He will then call on the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Jaafar and Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Najihah and attend a state banquet hosted in his honour by the royal couple.

The following day, the president will witness a special training session for the Malaysian national soccer youth team given by German soccer legend Franz Beckenbauer, who is now president of FC Bayern Munich, at the Sports Complex of the Police Training Centre in Jalan Semarak where President Herzog will also meet high-ranking Football Association of Malaysia (FAM) officials.

The president will later visit the Palm Oil Research Institute of Malaysia (Porim) in Bangi, tour the Kuala Lumpur Tower which was built with German expertise, and meet Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

On Friday, the president and his entourage will make a one-day visit to Sarawak where he will be entertained to a state dinner by the Yang Dipertua Negeri, Tun Ahmad Zaidi Adruce.

He will leave for Japan the following day.

The last visit by a German president to Malaysia was by President

Rikard von Weisacker 12 years ago. -- BERNAMA  
ZAB RM