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Walter-Malaysia

BELGIAN WRITER PRODUCES COFFEE TABLE BOOK ON M'SIA

By: Shukran Saharuddin

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 2 (Bernama) -- Belgian writer Francois Walter has produced a coffee table book that promotes tourism in Malaysia since his first visit to Penang 20 years ago.

"I find that there is not enough promotion for Malaysia in my country. It seems that Malaysia is not known in Belgium and other parts of Europe.

"So, I started to work on this project...this is not for any monetary reasons or gains but for my own self-satisfaction," said the 56-year-old Walter to Bernama.

He said he admired how the Malaysian people adopted to modern time without neglecting their own traditional values and norms.

Walter, who is fluent in Bahasa Melayu, said he was looking for a publisher in Malaysia to sell his 265-page book containing 240 pictures of Malaysia, its people and diverse culture.

The pictures were carefully selected from 12,000 slides shot by a photojournalist friend Yvan Deewerdt in the last five years.

The book, simply titled "Malaysia" has three chapters on Kuala Lumpur and its surroundings, the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak.

He said he had forked out RM400,000 to publish the book and intends to translate it to French, German, Spanish, Italian, Russian and Dutch.

"I will appoint some translators to do the work," said Walter, a banker in the Fortis Bank for 32 years.

About 1,000 copies have been sold in Belgium and had brought some 100 copies to Malaysia.

He said he was negotiating with Malaysia Airlines (MAS) to sell his books and market it in-flight. The book costs RM200 a copy.

"I also intend to produce some books on Langkawi and the northern region of this country. In my second book, I will cover all over Malaysia," he said.

On Nov 8, Walter had the opportunity to meet Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for 15 minutes at the Prime Minister's Office in Putrajaya.

He said Dr Mahathir showed keen interest in the book and planned to give copies of it to foreign leaders when they call on him or when he meets them overseas.

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