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Irish President to make four-day visit to Malaysia to strengthen bilateral

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - President of Ireland Mary McAleese will make a four-day state visit to Malaysia from Sept 29 to strengthen bilateral relations and co-operation.

Irish Ambassador to Malaysia Daniel Mulhall said the President would be accompanied by her husband Dr Martin McAleese.

"It will be a historic visit for Ireland as it is the first Irish state visit anywhere in the Southeast Asia region. It will mark yet another milestone in relations between the two countries," he said at a Press conference.

Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin and Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Fauziah are expected to grant her an audience. She will also hold discussions with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

In Penang, she will visit the Penang Medical College, which is a joint venture between University College Dublin, the Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland and the Penang Development Corporation.

She is also expected to address the National Chamber of Commerce Malaysia and the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations.

McAleese will be accompanied by a business delegation, whose members' interests reflect the shared technological strengths of both countries and will further develop their relationship.

"It is hoped that the presence of this business delegation and the contacts they make here will lead to a further expansion of trade, investment and educational links to the benefit of both countries," Mulhall said.

Describing the relationship between Ireland and Malaysia as "very friendly", he said the visit augured well for co-operation in many fields as Ireland was keen to develop stronger ties with countries outside of Europe like Malaysia.

On education, Mulhall said that there was a scope for further enhancement of Malaysia-Ireland relations in the area of English language studies.

"Ireland is an English-speaking country. We have considerable resources in the area of language studies or the teaching of English as we have developed some advanced method of e-Learning to facilitate the English language learning in Ireland," he said.

Mulhall said the skills and e-Learning method would be made available to Malaysians as the Malaysian Government was giving priority to the English language.