

13 AUG 2002
Ukraine-Visit

UKRAINIAN FIRST VICE-PM TO VISIT MALAYSIA BEGINNING SUNDAY

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 13 (Bernama) -- Ukrainian First Vice-Prime Minister Oleh Dubyna will make a four-day visit to Malaysia starting Sunday.

Ukrainian embassy Charge d'Affairs Valentyn Velychko said it is the first official visit by a Ukrainian leader since Malaysia and Ukraine established diplomatic relations in March 1992.

During the visit, Dubyna will call on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his counterpart, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

"We anticipate that a whole range of questions will be touched upon during this negotiation and briefing," Velychko told Bernama in an interview, here.

Velychko, who has been in Malaysia for two months, said the Ukrainian government considered Malaysia a very prospective and important partner to develop bilateral relations and ties in the political, economic, trade and commercial, technological including high-tech, educational and cultural fields.

"In order to facilitate the relationship between Ukraine and Malaysia, the Ukrainian government has decided to send a government delegation to Malaysia," he said.

He said the former Soviet Union country, which attained independence in 1991, was well-informed about Malaysia's success in development, political stability and prosperity.

"Malaysia plays a very important role in regional institutions such as Asean, Apec (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation). Dr Mahathir is very well known in Ukraine... he is a great leader to the nation," he said, expressing admiration for Dr Mahathir's leadership.

During the visit, Dubyna will also meet the Cabinet ministers, namely Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, Primary Industries Minister Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik and Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik.

A government-to-government agreement on trade is also expected to be signed by the two countries.

Dubyna is also scheduled to officially open the Ukrainian embassy at Jalan Tun Razak.

"The opening of the Embassy of Ukraine in Malaysia is a very important initiative by the Ukrainian government as it will ensure smooth interactions between government officials, government bodies or the common people.

"The embassy will do its best to provide good services for the official and unofficial levels. We would like to see the embassy as a window for Malaysia to Ukraine... as a diplomatic bridge between the two countries," Velychko said.

On bilateral trade between Malaysia and Ukraine, he said it was increasing and last year the volume was around USD80 million.

"It is not sufficient because we have the opportunities to increase the bilateral (trade) volume. The real trade between Ukraine and Malaysia is very small with most of the trade interactions and transactions being carried out via intermediators from Singapore and Hong Kong or some European countries like UK (United Kingdom)," he said.

Ukraine, located in eastern Europe, bordering Belarus, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia and Slovakia, is famous for its heavy industry, aircraft building, machine building industry and agricultural

products.

The maritime nation, with a population of 50 million, has invited Malaysian investors to participate in the country's economic activities such as in tourism and hospitality industry, manufacturing and to use the country as a hub for Malaysian exports to the eastern Europe countries.

In the education sector, Velychko said Ukraine, which is famous in the fields of medicine, pharmacy and surgery, would like to offer Malaysian students other specialities and options like air space, ship building, electronics and communications.

Currently, there are about 200 Malaysians studying medicine and pharmaceutical science in Ukraine, which are conducted in English.

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