

Najib's visit to Germany a major boost for bilateral ties, trade
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Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's official visit to Germany is a major boost for bilateral ties, trade and investment climate between Malaysia and Germany, which has a population of about 80.6 million and is the world's fourth largest economy.

The visit gave both existing and potential German investors in Malaysia the opportunity to voice out their opinions, challenges and suggestions directly to the country's premier.

"They (businesses) were very pleased to be given the opportunity to engage directly with the head of the government. It demonstrates our commitment to further encouraging their businesses in Malaysia," said Malaysian Investment Development Authority (Mida) chief executive officer Azman Mahmud.

Germany is Malaysia's largest investor from the EU. There are a total of 400 German companies in Malaysia. In the first six months of 2016, German companies invested a total of RM6.44 billion in Malaysia. Over the last 10 years, total investments have totalled RM35 billion.

The businesses were very happy with the remarks and assurances given by the prime minister on providing the right business environment for them, he told Bernama on the sidelines of the prime minister's three-day official visit which took off with a one-hour closed door dialogue session with top businesses.

This is Najib's first visit as the country's prime minister since taking office in 2009. His visit was on the invitation of German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

Both leaders had a bilateral meeting on Tuesday.

Companies participating in the dialogue included Atotech, AWS Schafer, BMW, Daimler, Osram, Volkswagen, Infineon, Bombardier Transportation, Ensinger, B Braun, Green Sugar and Biesterfeld International.

Besides the dialogue session, the prime minister also had bilateral meetings with XFab chief executive officer Rudi De Winter, Muhlbauer president Josef Muhlbauer, BMW Group

(Munich) senior vice president (Asia Pacific & South Africa) Hendrik von Kuenheim, and Aerodata AG director strategic business development Dr Manfred Haverland.

Najib, who is also finance minister, said about RM1.5 billion in potential future investment was revealed by companies he met during the dialogue session and bilateral meets, mainly in the semiconductor and machinery sector.

Their intention for new investment and re-investment demonstrates their confidence level in the country's attractiveness and stability, he said.

Azman said besides investment-related issues, businesses involved in the automotive sector were also keen to know about the country's National Automotive Policy.

"They wanted to know the future direction of it and the adoption of Euro 5 and energy efficient vehicles," he said.

Najib said the government would continue its efforts in making Malaysia the most attractive investment destination in South-East Asia and constantly encouraging existing investors to re-invest in the country.

Keen to draw mid-sized manufacturers

During his meeting with the business community, he also announced that besides the multinational companies, Malaysia is now keen to also attract the country's mid-sized manufacturers.

Accounting for a substantial number of companies and known collectively as "Mittelstand", they are the backbone of the economy, supplementing the bigger well-established industrial and manufacturing giants.

Najib believes that Malaysia's small and medium enterprises can learn much from German mid-sized companies especially in terms of their entrepreneurial spirit, their competitive strategies and their adaptation and innovation in advanced technology.

On the last leg of the three-day visit, Najib went to a port city in the state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, which is about 200km from the capital, Berlin.

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern is the sixth largest German state by area and the most thinly populated state.

He also went to Wismar, where Genting Hong Kong Ltd is managing three shipyards it acquired in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern last year for RM1.04 billion.

Genting has since renamed the shipyards as MV Werften and will focus on building large new cruise ships.

He said the venture in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern through the acquisition of the shipyards paves the way for more investments by Malaysian companies in the state.

In further fostering Malaysia-Germany relations, the prime minister expressed Malaysia's strongest interest in hosting the 16th Asia Pacific Conference of German Business in Kuala Lumpur in 2018.

“We hope it will materialise,” he added.

- *Bernama*

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