

Najib to launch EU-Msia FTA talks in Brussels
Malaysiakini.com
October 3, 2010

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak is scheduled to launch the Europe-Malaysia Free Trade Agreement negotiations on the sidelines of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) next week in Brussels.

"We hope to officially launch the negotiations during the Prime Minister's visit to Brussels in conjunction with ASEM hosted by Belgium," said EU Ambassador and Head of Delegation to Malaysia Vincent Piket.

Najib will attend the two-day ASEM Heads of State and Government Summit in Brussels beginning Oct 4.

"Should the FTA agreement with Malaysia be successful, Malaysia will gain preferential access to the European Union, currently the world's largest market," he told *Bernama* in Kuala Lumpur.

With half a billion consumers in EU-member countries, Piket said it would be an attractive destination for Malaysian exports.

He said the FTA would pave the way for long-term and stable Malaysia-EU trade ties.

According to an analyst, should the FTA be successful, Malaysian business would gain more in the long-run especially in the wake of the economic slowdown.

The analyst said the catalyst may come from the potential for the FTA to rebuild the wealth that has been lost during the recent economic slowdown.

As Malaysia was gearing towards achieving developed nation status, Piket also said that it was timely for Malaysia to start the FTA negotiations to complement the country in achieving the goals of the New Economic Model (NEM).

He said the FTA was very much part of the NEM and emphasised the promotion of a business-friendly economy and increased private sector share in the Gross Domestic Product.

The envoy pointed that all this would attract trade, quality investment, capital, skills and know-how and the FTA with the EU would certainly contribute towards this objective, adding that trade and investment were crucial to global recovery and economic growth.

With the current deadlock in the World Trade Organisation Doha Round, he said Malaysia and the 27-member EU should expand bilateral trade.

Malaysia is EU's second largest trading partner in Asean after Singapore, clearly ahead of much larger countries like Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam.

The EU, meanwhile, is the world's fourth largest trading partner and second largest source of foreign direct investment, he said.

Stressing that Malaysia was an important trading partner to the EU, Piket said some 2,000 European companies were currently operating in Malaysia.

- Bernama

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.
Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/144286>