

PM to kick off Malaysia-Europe FTA talks
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KUALA LUMPUR –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 (*pic*).

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* here.

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.

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

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