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PM to visit Milan Expo today

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GLOBAL EVENT: Malaysia's participation in expo to encourage people-to-people ties, gain feedback from Italian investors

ZAHARAH OTHMAN
MILAN
news@nst.com.my

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak arrived here yesterday for a three-day working trip, with a full-day visit to the Milan Expo 2015 scheduled today.

The prime minister, accompanied by his wife, Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, arrived from New York after attending the United Nations General Assembly there.

The visit by the prime minister is at the invitation of the Italian prime minister, Matteo Renzi, to attend the world's largest expo, which is held once every five years.

Briefing Malaysian journalists, Malaysian Ambassador to Italy Datuk Abdul Samad Othman said ties between Kuala Lumpur and Rome were dynamic, active and expected to improve.

Malaysia's participation in the expo is aimed at encouraging people-to-people ties and getting feedback from Italian investors and traders.

A total of 147 countries, including Malaysia, are participating in the Milan Expo 2015, which opened on May 1 and ends at the end of this month.

Since its opening, 2.3 million people have visited the Malaysian Pavilion, exceeding the target of 1.8 million, making Malaysia one of top five countries to receive the largest number of visitors. It is expected to reach 2.5 million by the end of the month.

Najib is scheduled to visit the

Malaysian Pavilion, where he will launch the "Malaysia Food Festival", as well as attend a Malaysia Day reception.

He is also expected to visit the Italian, United Arab Emirates and Kazakhstan Pavilions.

Najib will also deliver a keynote address at a roundtable meeting with Italian captains of industry. The meeting is expected to enhance bilateral ties with the exchange of information on trade and investment.

Last year, bilateral trade between the two countries reached about RM9 billion, covering sectors such as security, general trading, chemicals, machinery, electronics and electrical and hardware.

Italy exports high-value goods such as helicopters and military hardware to Malaysia.

"I am confident that with the various promotions here, the volume of trade between the two countries will increase. It is hoped that the prime minister of Italy will visit Malaysia next year," said Samad.

He added that Italy was fostering close ties with Malaysia and Asean, with an Asean Awareness seminar held a few days ago.

In a separate programme, Rosmah will open a fashion show by 18 Malaysian designers at the expo this afternoon. Among others, there will be collections by Radzuan Radziwill, Jantique, Hazree Wahid, Bon Zainal, Carven Ong and Qudyn.

The prime minister and his wife will leave for Malaysia tomorrow.