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Najib, Putin to hold bilateral talks in Sochi

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Summit provides opportunity for leaders from Russia and Asean to meet and discuss issues

SOCHI • Malaysia's Prime Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Najib Razak will hold bilateral talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin on mutual concerns in Russia's Black Sea resort city of Sochi as the Asean-Russia Commemorative Summit kicks off today.

Malaysian Ambassador to Russia Datuk Hayati Ismail said the summit provides opportunity for leaders from Russia and Asean to meet and discuss a myriad of issues.

"They are free to discuss (on any issue), it is up to the leaders," she told Malaysian journalists yesterday in Sochi on what could be high on the agenda of the Najib-Putin talks.

Najib was scheduled to fly to Sochi yesterday for the summit after concluding his working visit to the UK from May 15 to 18.

The Asean-Russia Commemorative Summit is being held to mark 20 years of Asean-Russia dialogue relations.

The Malaysian and Russian leaders meeting in Sochi is also being held months after the two countries signed up to set



Hayati (right) says Najib is also scheduled to hold a bilateral meeting with his Vietnamese counterpart on the sidelines of the summit tomorrow

up a joint commission for economic, scientific, technical and cultural cooperation (ESTC), a bilateral mechanism to further enhance bilateral relations between the two countries.

"We are making good progress on this agreement. We (Malaysia and Russia) will meet often on this agreement," said Hayati on the ESTC, which was sealed in November last year in Kuala Lumpur.

Hayati said Najib is also scheduled to hold a bilateral meeting with his Vietnamese counterpart Nguyen Xuan Phuc on the sidelines of the summit tomorrow.

It would be Najib's first meeting with Vietnam's prime minister, who was sworn into office in April this year.

Hayati said the commemorative summit is important to enhance Asean-Russia partnership.

"It provides an opportunity for Asean and Russia to strengthen and chart the future direction of relations, as we are moving towards a strategic partnership," she said.

She said the summit will adopt the Sochi Declaration entitled "Moving Towards A Strategic Partnership for Mutual Benefit".

The Sochi Declaration will have an overall view of strengthening the dialogue partnership based on the principles of mutual benefit, with the aim to promote peace, stability, prosperity and security in Asia Pacific.

The leaders will also take note of the Comprehensive Plan of Action (2016-2020), consisting of specific measures to strengthen relations over the next five years, and consider the report of the Asean-Russia Eminent Persons Group, which contains proposals on the future direction of Asean-Russia relations. — *Bernama*