

Economic Issues To Take Centrestage During Muhyiddin's Visit To Thailand
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BANGKOK, Aug 21 (Bernama) -- Improving Malaysia-Thailand bilateral ties, particularly in the economic field, will be one of the main objectives of the two-day visit to Thailand by Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

The visit beginning tomorrow is also an opportunity to establish closer rapport with Malaysians living in Thailand, says Malaysia's Ambassador in Thailand Datuk Nazirah Hussain.

She said the visit was important as it would be Muhyiddin's first since Yingluck Shinawatra became the prime minister.

Muhyiddin will make a courtesy call on Yingluck.

In economic terms, Nazirah said Thailand was Malaysia's fifth biggest trade partner in the world and the second largest in the Asean region, with total trade last year clinching US\$24 billion, a very impressive growth from merely US\$8.7 billion in 2000.

While in Bangkok, Muhyiddin is expected to visit the Halal Science Centre at Chulalongkorn University and attend a roundtable meeting with captains of industries from Malaysia and Thailand.

On the halal issue, Malaysia and Thailand can complement on each other's strength as Thailand has the capacity with its development in the agriculture field while Malaysia has an advantage with regard to recognition of halal brands.

Nazirah said the halal issue was important to Thailand which has the expectations to become the "Kitchen of the World".

On Malaysia-Thailand border issue, Nazirah said there were a lot of potential for business-matching for Malaysian and Thailand companies in the latter's southern region.

She said Malaysian companies should not shy away from the southern province just because of the reports of violence there but instead tap the opportunities available.

"The bigger the risk, the bigger the profit," she said, adding that several small-scale seminars have been held to encourage business-matching between Malaysian and Thailand companies in the region.

Nazirah also urged Malaysians to register with the Malaysian Embassy here to facilitate easier channelling of assistance if required.

To date, only 458 Malaysians have registered with the embassy, and there were still many who do not see the need to register, she said.

"Many of the Malaysians here are traders who have been staying here for a long time," she added.

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