

Malaysia and Trukhmenistan to Sign Five Documents During Najib's Official Visit Bernama

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ASHGABAT (Turkmenistan), June 8 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak will witness the signing of five documents that will further strengthen the existing close bilateral and trade relations between both countries during his second official visit to Turkmenistan beginning Monday.

Malaysian ambassador in Turkmenistan, Norman Muhamad said the documents included a joint statement between Malaysia and Turkmenistan and an agreement on cultural cooperation between Malaysia and Turkmenistan.

The others are the memorandum of understanding (MoU) on education cooperation and MoU on long-term cooperation between Petronas and State Agency in Charge of Hydrocarbon.

"Both countries will also sign the Agreed Minutes on the Terms of Reference for the Joint Trade Committee between Malaysia and Turkmenistan," Norman told Malaysianmedia, here, Sunday.

Najib's two-day visit to Turkmenistan is at the invitation of Turkmenistan President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov. His first official visit to Turkmenistan was from July 11 to 12, 2011.

Najib will be accompanied by his wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman, Tourism and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz and Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Abdul Wahid Omar during the visit.

Norman said the purpose of Najib's visit was to intensify bilateral relations and to expand trade relations between Malaysia and Turkmenistan since diplomatic relations were established between the two countries in 1992.

The Malaysian embassy in Ashgabat was opened in December 2011 and Turkmenistan opened its embassy in Kuala Lumpur two years later.

Norman said after Najib's visit to Turkmenistan in 2011 followed by Berdimuhamedov's visit to Malaysia the same year, bilateral relations between the two countries became stronger.

"There has been commitment by both countries towards this. If previously, the focus had been on oil and gas, Malaysia and Turkmenistan are now keen to diversify that cooperation into new areas like culture, education and the halal food industry."

Norman said in the Central Asian region, Turkmenistan was Malaysia's third largest trading partner.

Total trade between the two countries in 2013 was recorded at US\$33.13 million compared to US\$11.68 million in 2012 and US\$24.27 million in 2011.

"Malaysia's major exports to Turkmenistan include machinery and parts, iron and steel products, palm oil, chemicals and chemical by-products as well as electrical and electronic products.

"On the other hand, Malaysia's major imports from Turkmenistan include machinery, appliances and parts," he added.

Norman said Malaysia also wanted to encourage more students from Turkmenistan to further their studies at Malaysia's higher education institutions, after seeing a clear increase in 2011.

Currently, 144 Turkmenistan students are studying in Malaysia, with most of them opting for the technical field at Universiti Teknologi Petronas in Bandar Seri Iskandar, Tronoh, Perak while the rest chose the hotel field at private universities.

Norman said at Najib's meeting with Berdimuhamedov at the Presidential Palace, here, on Tuesday, the prime minister was also expected to touch on Malaysia's desire to promote tourism with Turkmenistan.

"This will include suggesting that Turkmenistan Airlines have direct flights to Malaysia," he said.

A total of 940 tourists from Turkmenistan visited Malaysia in 2013.

Najib is scheduled to arrive in Ashgabat on Monday night.

On Tuesday, he will meet Berdimuhamedov and then attend a meeting between the delegations of both countries before witnessing the signing of the five documents.

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