

## **Russia Cherishes Malaysia's Neutrality In Flight MH17 Tragedy**

**Bernama**

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KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 19 (Bernama) -- Malaysia's neutrality during the Malaysia Airlines (MAS) Flight MH17 tragedy last year was the pillar for continuous friendly relations between Malaysia and Russia, noted outgoing Russian ambassador to Malaysia, Lyudmila G. Vorobyeva.

She said Russia cherished Malaysia's stand on the matter and reaffirmed its cooperation to help facilitate the investigation in any possible way.

"We have already provided data even from our intelligence service sources, from our ministry of defence to the investigation team, and we think in this respect, Malaysia has a great role to play, especially (when) the aircraft and airline (MAS) belong to Malaysia, and Malaysian passengers were on the plane," she said.

Vorobyeva was speaking to Bernama in a "farewell" interview here recently. She left for home last week.

"It is our wish and we know that Malaysia also shares the same wish so that the official result of the investigation will be transparent and unbiased, and we want the world community to know what (really) happened to (Flight) MH17," she said.

She said the tragedy had not changed relations between Malaysia and Russia, but instead, highlighted the importance of maintaining good friendship between the two nations.

On July 17, Flight MH17 crashed in eastern Ukraine as it was flying from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur with 283 passengers and 15 crew on board.

The Boeing 777-200ER aircraft was shot down over the troubled country, but no one has so far, claimed responsibility for the incident.

On another note, Vorobyeva who served as ambassador to Malaysia since July 2010, expressed sadness at leaving the country.

"Malaysia is a wonderful country and I enjoyed my stay here. Now, it is time to leave; it is part of the job, (and) however much you like the country, but still you have to leave, sooner or later," she said, adding that she would miss Malaysia very much.

Spellbound over Malaysia's natural beauty, including the beaches, mountains and forests, she said what was most memorable was the friendship she had built during her service in the country.

Meanwhile on the proposal of visa-free travel for Malaysians, Vorobyeva said discussions

were still ongoing and hoped Russia would soon conclude the coordination of the agreement with Wisma Putra as it could create better cooperation in humanitarian, tourism and business sectors.

At the moment, Malaysians travelling to Russia required visa while Russians travelling to Malaysia can stay visa-free for up to 30 days.

She noted that Russian tourist arrival in Malaysia increased around 20 to 30 per cent every year, and estimated 80,000 were here last year.

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