

Muhyiddin Steps Up Effort For Malaysia UNESCO Bid

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From Abdul Muin Majid

PARIS, April 13 (Bernama) -- Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin is expected in the French capital Monday morning to attend events related to Kuala Lumpur's bid to be on the UNESCO executive board for the 2015-2019 term.

Malaysian Ambassador to France, Tan Sri Ismail Omar said Muhyiddin was scheduled to open the Malaysia Cultural Week 2015 at Place du Palais Royal on Monday, followed by the Intangible Cultural Week Exhibition at the UNESCO headquarters here, the day after.

UNESCO is the acronym for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

"In between, Tan Sri Muhyiddin will host a dinner for permanent delegates of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) countries and call on UNESCO director-general Irina Bokova," Ismail told the Malaysian media ahead of Muhyiddin's working visit here Monday.

The deputy prime minister will also visit the Organisation of the Economic Cooperation and Development headquarters for briefings on its work on technology and innovation, as well as education and skills.

Elaborating on Malaysia's UNESCO bid, Ismail noted that since joining the entity in 1958, Malaysia had sat on the board between 1978 to 1983, 1987-1991, 1993-1997, 1999-2003 and 2007-2011.

The ambassador said by virtue of currently being on the United Nations Security Council as non-permanent member, Malaysia was able to have a say on issues of global concern, and a place on the UNESCO board would allow the country to give decision-making input, including on future directions of the body.

"Besides, it would enable multicultural and multireligious Malaysia to highlight various assets of its cherished diversity to the world," he added.

Commenting on Malaysia-France bilateral relations, Ismail said they had gone from strength to strength with deepening ties, especially in trade, investment, defence and education.

"Our cooperation is also expanding into new areas like tourism, science and technology, energy and transportation," he said, adding that Malaysia was especially keen on building relationships with French small and medium-scale enterprises.

Ismail pointed out that sectors that could be focused on for greater collaboration included

aviation, automotive, biotechnology, medical and healthcare, optics and chemicals.

With France having some six million Muslims among its population, the largest in Europe, there was potential to expand trade in mainstream, as well as halal-based food products and beverages.

In 2014, Malaysia's total trade with France amounted to RM17.6 billion.

France is Malaysia's 16th largest trading partner, 19th largest export destination and 12th largest import source.

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