

## **Malaysia Accords State Welcome For Saudi Arabia's King Salman**

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 26 (Bernama) -- King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia was accorded a state welcome at Parliament Square here today at the start of His Majesty's four-day state visit to Malaysia.

Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Muhammad V greeted King Salman, who is making his maiden state visit to this Southeast Asian country of over 30 million people, upon his arrival at the square in the Malaysian capital at 11.50am.

Present were Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, his deputy Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and members of the Malaysian cabinet.

The welcoming ceremony began with the rendition of the national anthems of Saudi Arabia and Malaysia by the Royal Malay Regiment central band from the Sungai Besi Camp, followed by a 21-gun salute.

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques inspected a guard-of-honour mounted by four officers and 103 men of the 1st Battalion of the Royal Malay Regiment, led by Major Azlan Shah Baharum.

Najib had earlier welcomed the King at the Bunga Raya Complex of the KL International Airport (KLIA) in Sepang.

Najib greeted King Salman, who donned a flowing cream robe and dark glasses, with a warm embrace at the tarmac as the Saudi King embarked on the visit at the invitation of Sultan Muhammad V.

Also on hand to receive the King at KLIA were Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman and Defence Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein, who is also minister-in-attendance.

King Salman was joined by Najib for the 45-minute car ride to the hill-top Parliament Square in central Kuala Lumpur for the official welcoming ceremony.

During the event, members of the Malaysian cabinet and diplomatic corps were introduced to the visiting King.

His Majesty was accompanied by a 600-strong delegation, comprising members of the royal household and cabinet ministers, for the visit until March 1.

King Salman is scheduled to grace a state banquet at Istana Negara (National Palace) Sunday night, hosted in his honour by Sultan Muhammad V.

The event will be marked by the conferment of a state award on King Salman who ascended the throne on Jan 23, 2015.

On Monday, His Majesty is to travel to the Malaysian administrative capital Putrajaya for talks with Najib on matters of mutual interest.

They will preside over the signing of a number of agreements and memorandums of understanding (MoU) on cooperation in areas such as economy, science and education, human resources, as well as haj and umrah.

The Malaysian National News Agency (Bernama) and Saudi Press Agency (SPA) are also slated to ink a pact on news exchange cooperation.

King Salman will grace an official luncheon in Putrajaya hosted by Najib at his Seri Perdana official residence that offers commanding views of the nation's verdant administrative hub.

His Majesty's itinerary for Monday also features receiving an honorary degree from the prestigious Universiti Malaya, the nation's oldest, in Kuala Lumpur.

Other highlights of the visit are the convening of the Malaysia-Saudi Arabia Business Forum, a get-together with muftis and a gathering of Saudi Arabian students and Malaysian students sponsored by the oil-rich kingdom.

Another notable event is the signing of an MoU on cooperation between Malaysian and Saudi Arabian oil companies.

The International Islamic University of Malaysia will confer an honorary degree, as well as a lifetime outstanding achievement award, on King Salman.

The last state visit by a King of Saudi Arabia to Malaysia was in 2006, by the late King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. The late King Faisal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud made a state visit to Malaysia in 1970.

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