

French President Accorded State Welcome

KUALA LUMPUR, March 28 (Bernama) -- French President Francois Hollande, who is on a two-day state visit to Malaysia, was accorded a state welcome at Parliament Square here Tuesday.

Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Muhammad V greeted Hollande upon his arrival at the square in the Malaysian capital at 9.30am.

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 France and Malaysia by the Royal Malay Regiment central band from the Sungai Besi Camp, followed by a 21-gun salute.

The French President then inspected a guard-of-honour mounted by four officers and 103 men of the 1st Battalion of the Royal Malay Regiment led by Major Muhammad Eqram Muhammad Rosly.

The visit, beginning last night, was part of Hollande's first visit to ASEAN, which also included his state visits to Singapore and Indonesia.

It was the second presidential-level visit from Paris to Kuala Lumpur after President Jacques Chirac's state visit in July 2003.

The visit is very timely as it also coincides with the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Malaysia and France.

Hollande, accompanied by ministers, members of parliament, officials, as well as a business delegation, is scheduled for a business meeting with entrepreneurs prior to restricted and delegation meeting with Najib in Putrajaya.

Najib and Hollande are scheduled to witness the signing of deals which included a defence-related agreement and another agreement on the establishment of a platform for Sustainable Agriculture Landscapes in South East Asia.

Later, Hollande is scheduled to witness a static demonstration of the newly arrived A400M transporter aircraft at the Royal Malaysian Air Force base in Subang.

He is scheduled to have an audience with the Yang di-Pertuan Agong at Istana Negara, followed by a state banquet before leaving for Jakarta, Indonesia, tonight.

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Source: <http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v8/newsindex.php?id=1342025>