

Laos' Prime Minister Begin Official Visit To Malaysia Today

KUALA LUMPUR, May 9 (Bernama) -- Laos Prime Minister Dr Thongloun Sisoulith will be undertaking an official visit to Malaysia from today (May 9) until Wednesday (May 10).

The Foreign Ministry (Wisma Putra) in a statement today said the visit was at the invitation of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and that this is the first official visit of Dr Thongloun since assuming office in April 2016.

"The official visit of Dr Thongloun Sisoulith to Malaysia emphasises the importance that Laos attaches to its relationship with Malaysia.

"The visit also provides an excellent opportunity for the leaders to review the progress of the existing bilateral relations and discuss possibilities for strengthening relations," said the statement.

Dr Thongloun, who is scheduled to arrive in Kuala Lumpur at 9am today (May 9), will be accompanied by several cabinet ministers, deputy ministers and senior officials.

According to Wisma Putra, during the visit, the Laotian prime minister would be accorded a welcoming ceremony before attending a restricted meeting with Najib at the prime minister's office, followed by a delegation meeting.

"It is expected that both leaders will discuss and exchange views on bilateral relations and focus will be given on expanding economic cooperation as well as on regional and international issues of common interest," the statement said.

In the afternoon, Najib is to host an official luncheon in honour of Dr Thongloun and his delegation.

The Laotian prime minister is also scheduled to deliver the opening remarks at the Malaysia-Lao PDR Business Forum at the Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE), before having an audience with Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Sultan Muhammad V at the Istana Negara later in the evening.

The trade value between Malaysia and Laos has been on the increase these past years whereby in 2016, Malaysia's total trade with Laos amounted to US\$30.96 million compared to US\$17.7 million in 2015.

"Malaysia was also the fifth largest foreign investor in Laos with a total of approximately US\$1 billion worth of investments in the country in 2016," the statement said.

The statement also added that Malaysia has recorded 31,061 Laotian tourist arrivals in 2016 compared to 24,228 in 2015.

"In this context, it is hoped that the visit will provide further impetus to the state of bilateral relations between the two countries and provide a platform for both leaders to renew personal contacts and build closer rapport and understanding," Wisma Putra said.

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