

Malaysia's "attractive" position draws French investment

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By Aishah Mohamad Afandi & Siti Radziah Hamzah



Frederic Laplanche

CYBERJAYA, Feb 10 -- France's keenness to strengthen its economic relationship with Malaysia has translated into a number of investments in the latter over the past two years.

France ambassador to Malaysia, Frederic Laplanche said Malaysia's "attractive" position in the ASEAN region had been the lure for French multinationals to invest in the country.

"We have been investing in a broad range of industries including aviation, food and agriculture, finance as well as energy.

"Malaysia is attractive to us because the country has incredibly talented engineers who were both trained locally as well as in France," he told Bernama on the sidelines of a dialogue session between French multinational companies with Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad here today.

Some of the major French companies operating in Malaysia are natural gas distribution company Engie; Schneider Electric, retail banking company BNP Paribas,

Monin, automotive giant Groupe PSA, as well as defence and aeronautics global players, Thales Group and Dassault Aviation.

Laplanche cited aviation as one sector that France has heavily invested in, saying that Airbus uses components which are built and produced in Malaysia, and in the process, created thousands of high skilled jobs.

He added that in its latest expansion plan, Dassault Aviation chose Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport in Subang over Seletar Airport in Singapore to build its maintenance, repairs and overhaul (MRO) hub for Southeast Asia.

France also has a stake in Malaysia's automotive sector through Groupe PSA, which, after expanding its operations to Kedah, is currently assembling and exporting Peugeot 3008 and 5008 models to Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar, the Philippines and Indonesia.

Groupe PSA sells and exports Peugeot, Citroën, DS, Opel and Vauxhall brands.

"This shows that French companies are committed to making Malaysia their operations hub, bringing in high technology especially those related to the fourth industrial revolution," Laplanche said.

According to statistics provided by the Malaysian French Chamber of Commerce and Industry, there are about 500 French companies here in Malaysia, comprising over 300 subsidiaries and employing over 30,000 people with a turnover of RM20 billion.

"We are ready to enhance our relationship with Malaysia in all forms, ranging from investments to education," the ambassador added.

Commenting on Brexit, he said France is poised to be "the best entry point to Europe" by virtue of its economic position.

The United Kingdom formally left the European Union on Jan 31 this year and is now in an 11-month transition period before exiting entirely this Dec 31.

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