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Xi'an - Malaysia's "halal gateway" into China

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By Niam Seet Wej, Bernama



Malaysia views Xi'an, the capital of western China's Shaanxi province, as the gateway to enter China's vast halal market, Agriculture and Agro-based Industry. But other provinces around Shanxi are also in need of halal products.

XI'AN (China) — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak says Xi'an is the halal gateway for Malaysian halal products to enter China, the world's second largest economy.

There are about 140,000 Muslims in Xi'an, which makes it an ideal place to promote halal products from Malaysia, he told Malaysian journalists after visiting the Museum of Qin Terracotta Warriors and Horses here today.

Najib is on a six-day official visit to China to mark the 40th anniversary of the Malaysia-China establishment of diplomatic relations.

Meanwhile, Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob said the 3rd Malaysia-Xi'an Halal Food Festival Week is expected to generate RM20 million sales.

"Last year, the sales amounted to RM15 million as compared to RM9 million in 2012," he said.

Organised by Ismail Sabri's ministry, the minister said sales from the food fair held at Bei Yuanmen Street (Muslim Street) increased every year as Malaysian foods were widely accepted by the Chinese visitors here.

Sabri told Malaysian journalists after visiting the Xi'an San Bao Shuangxi (International) Halal Food Trading Mart: "So, we will make Xi'an as the entry point for our halal products to penetrate other provinces and regions".

The number of Malaysian entrepreneurs participating in the fair had also increased to 35 from last year's 30, he said.

"We will soon increase our products to 500 to 1,000 stock-keeping units," he said.

Only 15 Malaysian entrepreneurs took part in the first exhibition held in 2012, he said.

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Sabri said, "Although the Muslims in China have a keen interest for our halal products, the obstacles are the local authorities' rules and regulations. This has prevented our products from entering this vast nation."



XI'AN (China), 27 May — Malaysian Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob at the halal food show

"Nevertheless, I believe Malaysia's close relations with China will yield more opportunities for us," he added.

Meanwhile, Sha PengCheng, chairman of the Board of Directors of Xi'an San Bao Shuang Xi Group, said there was huge demand for Malaysian halal products among China's Muslim community.

Hence, he hoped to see more Malaysian products to be introduced in the country.

Among the participants of the exhibition, which began yesterday and will go on until May 31, is Fatihah Frozen Food Sdn Bhd that offered a number of halal products including ready-made frozen food such as curry puffs, samosa, roti canai, popiahs.

Fatihah, who was participating in the fair for the second year this year, told Bernama she had increased her sales target this year to 50,000 yuan from last year's 40,000 yuan.

"I am introducing two new products this year — frozen durian spring rolls and frozen durian puffs.

"The Chinese visitors here love durians," she said, adding that the missing Malaysia Airlines MH370 flight incident has not affected her business.

"They just love our products, the flight incident does not have any negative impact on us at all," she added.

Of the 239 passengers and crew on board the flight that mysteriously disappeared while en route to Beijing from the Kuala Lumpur International Airport on March 8, 153 of them were Chinese nationals.

Businessman Alan Tan Cheng Learn, who is involved in the honey industry for nearly four years, said his products received good response from the local visitors.

Tan, who was participating in the fair for the first time this year, said he was surprised over the overwhelming response from the Chinese here.

"Maybe they are more confident in Malaysia-made products than the locally made ones," he added.

— BERNAMA

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