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'No direct impact on Malaysia should UK pull out of EU'

LONDON: The United Kingdom's (UK) decision to remain or withdraw from the European Union (EU) will not have a direct impact on Malaysia, said Malaysian High Commissioner to the UK Datuk Ahmad Rasidi Hazizi.

He said this is because of the strong foundation for the bilateral relationship that has been built between the two countries.

"We have built a strong foundation in our relationship with the UK and even the EU. People-to-people and government-to-government relationships are strong, so it won't tremendously affect us in that sense," he said.

A referendum is due to be held on June 23 to decide whether Britain should exit (Brexit) or remain in the EU, with the latest survey indicating that Britons are evenly divided on the issue.

"We don't know what will happen to the world if this happens but our relationship is tremendous," said Ahmad Rasidi, noting that Malaysia is still a part of the Commonwealth and it has bilateral relations with EU countries as well.

"If it remains [in the EU], it will be status quo but we will adjust to whatever the situation is," he told the Malaysian media recently, ahead of the working visit by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak to the UK.

Najib is in London for several events, namely — the Malaysia-UK Investor Showcase, topping out ceremony of Legacy 1 at Embassy Gardens, the 6th Global Science and Innovation Advisory Council meeting and the launching of Khazanah Europe Investment Ltd.

Ahmad Rasidi said the investor showcase on May 16 is important as it involves prominent people in

business, which will be a forum set to learn and exchange ideas with a view to promoting a stronger Malaysia-UK partnership through business opportunities and long-term investment.

The showcase is co-hosted by the UK-Asean Business Council, Malaysian High Commission in London, Malaysian Investment Development Authority and Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council, a non-profit organisation that aims to facilitate increased trade and investment across the Commonwealth.

The prime minister is expecting a courtesy call from the first woman and the sixth secretary-general of the Commonwealth Patricia Scotland before the event, which Ahmad Rasidi said would be a good start for further firm commitment as Malaysia was expected to host the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in 2020 and assume its chair for the 2020-2022 term.

He said the presence of the prime minister is important as the forum involves both UK and Malaysian investors with lots of opportunities to help boost investments and trade further.

He added that Malaysian investors were strong in the property sector in London, with the likes of investments by Lembaga Tabung Haji, Employees Provident Fund, Federal Land Development Authority or Felda, Sime Darby and others.

However, efforts are also being made to bring in Malaysian expertise and technologies to be involved in research and development activities here following the success of iGene Sdn Bhd, the developer of autopsy imaging software solution, in providing the technology in the UK. — *Bernama*