

Language and Cultural attaches to be appointed to Malaysian missions abroad

By Zaharah Othman - October 3, 2022 @ 7:00pm



Foreign minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Abdullah cutting the MCD 25th anniversary cake with Rosita Heilek (centre) president of MCD and newly-appointed language and cultural advisor to the foreign minister and Malaysian Consul General in Frankfurt Farzamia Sarkawi (left). - NSTP/ZAHARAH OTHMAN

FRANKFURT (GERMANY): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) will appoint language and cultural attaches to be based in Malaysian missions around the world in line with the government's focus on language and cultural diplomacy post pandemic.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Abdullah who was in Germany in conjunction with a Special Programme to Promote Language and Cultural Diplomacy from Sept 27 to Oct 2, made the announcement at the Malaysian Club Deutschland 25th Anniversary Gala Dinner at the Marriot Hotel in the city last night.

He said the first attache posting will be in Germany to be followed by nine other countries around the world.

Elaborating on the role of a language and cultural attache, Saifuddin said the appointed officer will organise Malay language classes as well as a series of discussions and talks by academicians from Malaysia.

"Our neighbouring countries have started this a long time ago and one country organised such programmes in 50 cities in more than 20 countries. And we are only starting.

"We have Malay language classes in China and in one or two other countries that are initiated by individuals. We would like to support these efforts," he said.

Saifuddin later announced the appointment of Rosita Heilek, president of Malaysian Club Deutschland, as language and cultural advisor to the foreign minister.

In appointing Rosita, a former airline stewardess and retired supervisor onboard with United Airlines, and a stalwart in promoting Malaysian culture and food for the past 25 years, Saifuddin said:

"It is a recognition to someone who has done a wonderful job with her team, for 25 years.

"This is the first time that MOFA is organising this kind of activities overseas. Of course, we will get assistance from other agencies, but I thought it would be appropriate for someone who has that personal experience to be appointed as the advisor to the foreign minister for the language and cultural diplomacy."

The minister added, "I am aware that other Malaysian diasporas (in other countries) are as active as the one here (in Frankfurt) and I am looking forward to engage with them in the best way to coordinate. We start from here and then to other countries."

"In order for us to further upskill and run in the most systematic manner this programme called language and cultural diplomacy, we need to have someone in charge and he/she will be called language and cultural attache to be appointed from among officers of the relevant ministries such as Ministry of Tourism Arts and Culture (MOTAC) and the Ministry of Higher Education," he said.

The minister added that just like other attaches such as the defence attache, the appointed officer will be attached at Malawakil or Malaysian missions abroad.

"We are hopeful that we will get the budget from the coming 2023 budget and we will get JPAS's approval.

"Then we can start appointing. We are hopeful that the first appointment will be in Germany and followed by 9 other Malawakil," he said after the gala dinner attended by the Malaysian diaspora and friends in and around Frankfurt.

During the six day working visit, Saifuddin was accompanied by two prominent academicians from the National University of Malaysia (UKM), Prof Datuk Dr Shamsul Amri Baharudin and Prof Datuk Dr Anis Yusal Yusoff had attended round table discussions in Frankfurt and Berlin.

As part of promoting Cultural Diplomacy, the minister visited the Institute of Cultural Diplomacy and participated in a special lecture by Professor Datuk Dr. Shamsul on Malaysia's experience with social cohesion and national unity.

The food for anniversary gala dinner themed "Welcome to Sarawak" was cooked by celebrity chef Dato' Ismail Ahmad who had been doing so with a team of dedicated volunteers from the Malaysian diaspora for the past 16 years at the Marriot Hotel.

The Sarawak Arts Council Dance Group enthralled the audience with their traditional dances, songs and music.