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Mahathir-China

COOPERATION BETWEEN CHINA AND MALAYSIA SET TO EXPAND, SAYS MAHATHIR
(Embargo: For release at 10.30pm today)

KUALALUMPUR, April 30 (Bernama) -- Greater cooperation between the governments of Malaysia and China is set to develop as the economies of the two countries expand, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight. At the same time, there would inevitably be more contacts between the people of the two countries, whether through government or private sponsorship, the Prime Minister added.

"The economic linkages and interaction between China and Malaysia will grow in the future. And, it will be to the benefit of both countries," he said at the Malaysia-China Friendship Association dinner here.

Dr Mahathir said the time had come to maximise the positive aspects of the links between Malaysians and the Chinese of mainland China as there was a lot of benefit to be derived from the linkages and the friendship between them.

Malaysians were investing and helping to develop China which is the biggest importer of Malaysian palm oil and the Chinese were also investing and proposing many joint venture projects here, he added. -- more
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He said that because of ideological differences, the relationship between the two countries had for a long time not been as good as it should be but things had changed greatly.

"Today, the relationship is as normal as can be. The past is very much forgotten and in many ways irrelevant," he added.

Dr Mahathir said although both countries were still ideologically different, Malaysia's policy was to ignore these differences in the conduct of her foreign relations.

He also said the fact that a lot of Malaysians had roots in China was accepted. "But, they are Malaysians and their relation with China is based on their being Malaysians, albeit, with Chinese roots."

As much as the Malaysian Chinese have a special interest in China, Malays have a special interest in the Muslims of China whose population is more than the number of Malays in Malaysia, he added.

"There is a healthy curiosity which can help foster understanding and friendship between the two peoples," he said. -- more

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The Prime Minister also said that Malaysia was less apprehensive about possible disputes between the two countries because of China's significant acceptance of the principles of peaceful coexistence.

He said: "Disputes will arise between the best of friends. But, if the settlement of disputes is based ON agreed principles, resolutions are much more likely.

"Malaysia is less apprehensive about possible disputes because of the principles which govern China's foreign relations. Malaysia of course has always adhered to these principles." -- Bernama