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China backs call to review human rights declaration

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - China will support Malaysia's move to review the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

China's Prime Minister Li Peng said the statement by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on July 27 that Malaysia might submit a proposal to the United Nations to review the declaration was one with "vision and courage".

"We want to express our appreciation. We also want to express our support," he said through an interpreter during a question-and-answer session after delivering a paper on "Towards A Relationship of Friendship and Good Neighbourliness Geared to the 21st Century" here.

The talk, organised by the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations, was also attended by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, other Cabinet Ministers, Deputy Ministers and businessmen.

Speaking to reporters after a meeting between the delegations headed by Dr Mahathir and Li at the Prime Minister's Department, Abdullah said Malaysia welcomed China's commitment to participate in seminars and meetings to discuss the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

He said Li had agreed not only to support Malaysia's proposal to review the declaration but also to be an "active player" if the issue was tabled at the United Nations.

Abdullah said Li had also reiterated Beijing's support for the East Asia Economic Caucus, adding that informal discussions on the issue should continue.

He said the discussions between the Malaysian and Chinese delegations went on in a smooth and cordial atmosphere and included topics such as bilateral issues, Cambodia, overlapping claims in the South China Sea and more landing rights for Malaysia Airlines in Beijing.

Asked to elaborate on his statement during his public lecture that China's President Jiang Zemin would attend an informal summit of East Asian countries in Kuala Lumpur at the end of the year to enable the countries to join hands in a concerted effort to promote the establishment of a fair and just new international political and economic order characterised by peace and stability, Li said:

"The current world order is not rational with some countries trying to lead the rest of the world and others attempting to bully other countries.

"It is not fair and just in the political world.

"In the economic field, the rich countries are getting richer while the poor are getting poorer. We will try to address these problems at the meeting."

On the United States-Japan security alliance, he said there had been recent statements by a senior Japanese official that the alliance would "cover" Taiwan and added that this was not acceptable since Taiwan was part of China's territory.

He said although overall relations with Tokyo had been good, China was vigilant over a small element of militarism found in Japan.

He said China's military was defensive in nature and would not pose any threat to neighbouring countries and added: "We have not deployed any aircraft carrier yet."

During his speech, he said Asean and China shared the need for securing regional and international peace and Beijing was ready to join Asean countries to work unremittingly for good neighbourly and friendly

relations geared to the 21st century.

He also outlined five ways to create good-neighbourly and friendly China-Asean relations.

These include respecting each other and treating each other as equals and maintaining that every country in the world has the right to choose its political structure or development path in the light of its national conditions.

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