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China-Bilateral

NEW LEADERS OF MALAYSIA AND CHINA HAVE ESTABLISHED PERSONAL CONTACT

By: Santha Oorjitham

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 21 (Bernama) -- Leaders in Malaysia and China have both handed over to their successors in the past year.

And the new leaders of both countries have already established personal contact with each other.

"The power transition in both countries had a soft landing," China's

Ambassador to Malaysia, Hu Zhengyue, told Bernama in an interview.

He said bilateral relations between the new leaders during the transition have also been "very smooth and very meaningful."

Hu said Malaysia's leaders had been consistent in their relationship with China from the beginning.

"Tun Dr Mahathir (Mohamad) led Malaysia for 22 years and contributed greatly to this," he said.

Before taking over as Prime Minister from Dr Mahathir on Oct 31, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi visited China last year and he is expected to visit again this year, with China's leadership reciprocating.

On Jan 11, at the signing of the Agreement on Cultural Cooperation between Malaysia and China, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak "expressed his personal contribution to bilateral relations within the framework of Datuk Seri Abdullah's foreign policy," said the Ambassador.

Hu recalled that Najib's father, Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, was one of the first leaders to visit China and under his Premiership, Malaysia became the first ASEAN country to establish diplomatic ties with China, in 1974.

Commenting on Tun Razak's contributions, the Ambassador quoted an old Chinese saying, "When we drink water we must remember who dug the well."

He said Najib attached great importance to the establishment of diplomatic relations with China by his father.

"We find it very intriguing that he has already visited all the cities in China which his father visited," Hu observed.

Najib started educational cooperation with China in 1996, when

he was
Education Minister by signing a Memorandum of Understanding with his
counterpart.

Today, there are over 10,000 students from China in Malaysian
tertiary
institutions and over 1,000 Malaysians studying in Chinese
institutions of
higher learning.

As Defence Minister, Hu said, Najib also began exchanges between
both
Defence Ministries "and made friends with many Chinese Generals."

Defence delegations and naval fleets from both countries visit
each
other each year.

China attends the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace
(LIMA)
exhibition every year.

China is also working closely with Malaysia in the fight against
terrorism, Hu said.

"And we are willing to discuss joint manoeuvres for search and
rescue,"
he added.

Hu said 2004 was a "very warm" year for bilateral ties, with
both
countries marking the 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations. It
was also
Malaysia-China Friendship Year and the 600th anniversary of the
first
official contact between China and Malaysia with the visit of
Admiral Zheng
He (Cheng Ho).

Celebrations of these events will include a Chinese Culture
Festival
and China Science and Technology exhibition in Malaysia, a Malaysia
Week in
China, academic symposia on bilateral relations and bilateral
technology
innovation, and visits between high-ranking civil servants and
entrepreneurs.

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