

**Foresight In Forging Ties With China In 1974 Pays Dividends**  
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KUALA LUMPUR -- Najib Tun Razak said Malaysia's "considerable amount of foresight" in establishing diplomatic relations with China in 1974 has paid dividends.

The Prime Minister said China was Malaysia's biggest trading partner globally and Malaysia, in turn, was China's biggest trading partner within Asean.

The decision had made China "a friend, not an adversary; a colleague, not a competitor; a partner, not a rival", he said.

Malaysia was the first country in Southeast Asia to forge ties with China in 1974, and the other Asean member states quickly followed suit, he said in his speech at the Malaysia-China Economic and Trade Cooperation Forum at a hotel here yesterday.

Also present was Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao who arrived yesterday for a two-day official visit to Malaysia.

Najib said that by coming together at all levels - national, regional and global, the two countries and their peoples would be able to fulfil their true potential and secure their place at the forefront of the new global society.

"Our countries and peoples have their own unique skills, traits and cultures, but we are united by a shared sense of national purpose and an unshakeable belief in the power of enterprise and opportunity," he said.

Najib said the attendance of so many participants, about 1,000 people, at the forum was a testament both to the strong and enduring ties between China and Malaysia and to the unwavering economic focus and far-sighted leadership of the Chinese premier.

"I know that His Excellency's visit has been eagerly awaited, not only by our Chinese community but by all Malaysians," he said.

Wen, in his speech, said China and Malaysia were close neighbours and had enhanced mutual trust and close communication on bilateral, regional and international issues.

"Malaysia was the first Asean country to establish diplomatic ties with China. The Chinese people are impressed with Malaysia's development and progress. We support each other on any issue," he said.

Wen said the relationship between the two countries entered a new stage when Najib chose China as his first country to visit after taking office as the Malaysian prime minister two years ago.

"China and Malaysia have become sincere friends who support each other. As the relationship moves forward, our common interest becomes stronger and the people gain even greater benefit.

"As China develops further, it will have stronger needs and enhance cooperation with other countries, including Malaysia," he said.

On cooperation in higher education, Wen said there were more than 10,000 Chinese students in Malaysia, making China Malaysia's largest source of foreign students.

"There are 4,000 Malaysian students in China and they become envoys who carry the Malaysia-China relationship," he said.

After attending the business forum, Wen had a 30-minute private meeting with former Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi before departing for Jakarta.

Speaking to reporters, Abdullah said they exchanged views on several areas, including traditional and Islamic medicine as well as the "halal" industry.

(Bernama)

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