

# Chinese officials mark 32-year ties with visit

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BY JANE RITIKOS  
newsdesk@thestar.com.my

**SEPANG:** Exactly 32 years ago, the leaders of China and Malaysia established formal diplomatic relations, sowing a seed that has now grown "into a big, solid tree with bountiful fruits."

Cheng Ruisheng, who wrote a memoir *Forty Years of Good Neighbourly Relations*, recalled that when Malaysia first sought to improve ties with China, it was not easy.

At that time, China refused to recognise Malaysia's name as it actively supported Indonesia's confrontation against Malaysia in the 1960s.

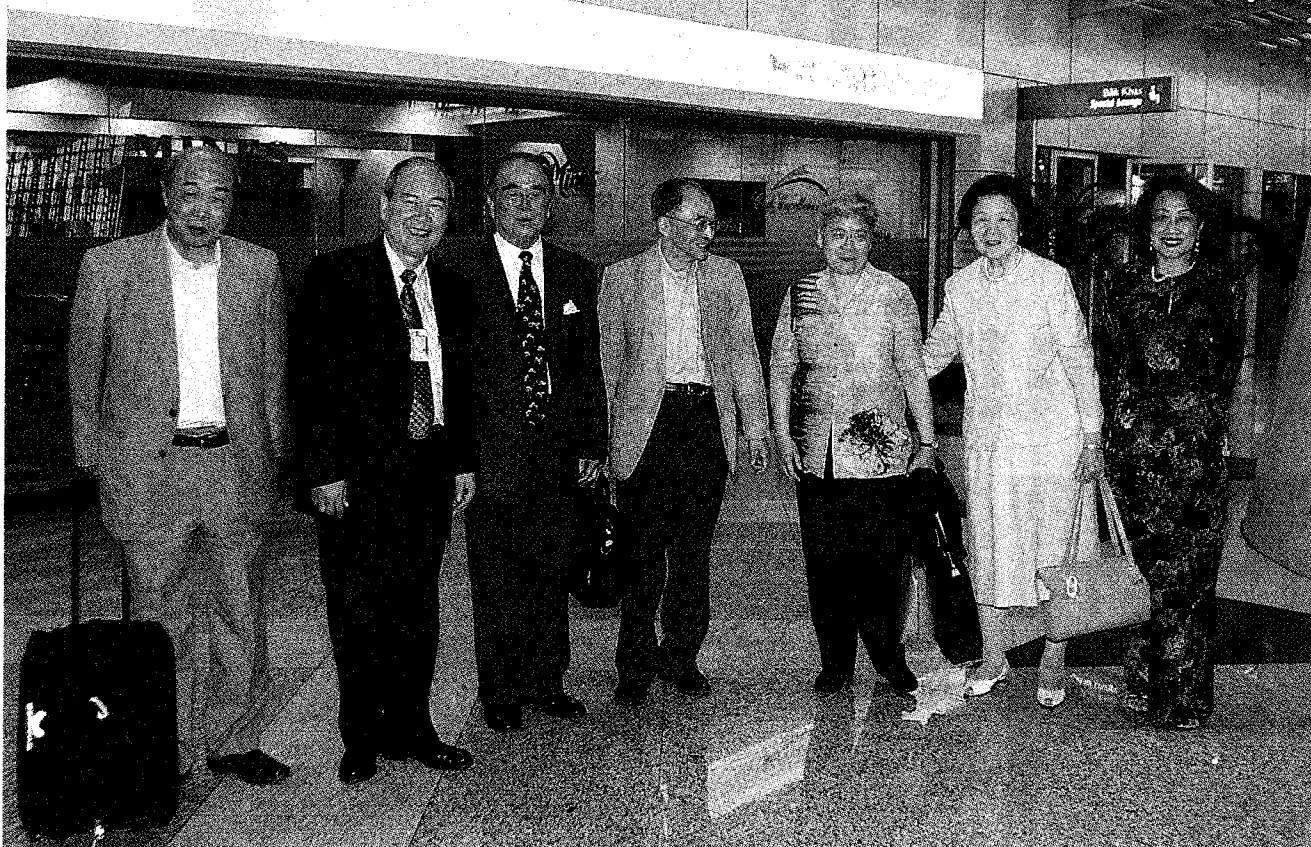
Chinese press reports used quotation marks when mentioning the name of Malaysia.

However, China's ties with Indonesia cooled after 1967 and it looked for a way to join the Soviet Union and the United States in having amicable relations with Malaysia.

In 1971, a flood that claimed many lives and destroyed property offered China an opportunity to reach out in a friendly manner to Malaysia.

In its message of sympathy, China removed the quotation marks, said Cheng, who was in the first Chinese delegation to visit Malaysia in 1971.

Mutual efforts to improve ties culminated in the esta-



**HISTORICAL VISITORS:** The officials whom Tun Razak met in China during his trip to establish diplomatic ties in 1974 arriving at KLIA for a visit to Malaysia.

ishment of formal diplomatic ties by Malaysia's second Prime Minister, the late Tun Abdul Razak, and then Chinese premier Zhou Enlai on May 31,

1974.

During his official visit to China last year, Tun Abdul Razak's son, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak,

invited Cheng and three other former China officials who were involved in the 1974 diplomatic connection between the two nations to visit

Malaysia.

They include Zhang Lian, who was then deputy division chief of the China Foreign Ministry's Department of

Asian Affairs; Liang Dong, also from the same department who had served as an attaché in the Chinese Embassy in Malaysia; and Tang Wensheng, who was the personal interpreter to then chairman Mao Tse Tung when Tun Razak visited China.

"During our visit we will witness three 'greats' - our great friendship, Malaysia's great achievements and the great harmony of the Malaysian races," said Cheng, the former deputy director-general of the China Foreign Ministry.

Cheng, who visited Malaysia in June 1973 as deputy head of the China table-tennis delegation, recalled how the group, headed by world table-tennis champ Zhuang Zedong, was warmly received by the Malaysian Table-Tennis Association president Tan Sri Michael Chen, whom he credited with playing a significant role in Malaysia-China ties.

Chen and his wife Puan Sri Helen were among those who received the group at the KL International Airport yesterday.

Tourism Minister Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor feted the group to a dinner last night and Najib will host a dinner for them at his residence tonight.

They will also visit Penang, Malacca and Negri Sembilan.