

Abdullah's China visit will enhance mutual co-operation, says Beijing

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's visit to China — which marks the 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations between both countries — is set to enhance mutual co-operation.

The Chinese Government, in preparing for the significant event later this month, has ensured that the visit would be a comprehensive one, said Foreign Affairs Ministry Information Department deputy director-general Liu Jianchao.

He said leaders of both countries were expected to exchange views on developing ties further as well as adopting "new channels" of co-operation.

"There has been tremendous progress clinched over the past 30 years and bilateral relations have also reached new heights.

"Both share a common vision to promote neighbourly relations while the leadership (of both countries) have attached great importance to strengthening China-Malaysia relations," he said, when speaking to

visiting journalists from the National Union of Journalists Malaysia at his office here today.

The journalists are on a goodwill visit at the invitation of the All China Journalists Association.

Good neighbourly ties between the two countries, built over years of trust, has enabled both Governments to resolve disputes amicably, as was seen in resolving the Spratlys issue.

"Our basic guideline in our foreign policy is to foster bilateral as well as regional co-operation and China wants to be a responsible neighbour of Asean.

"We are striving for a win-win situation for every country in the region. As such, we are now actively promoting a free trade area (FTA) with Asean countries as we believe that in the long run, it will benefit all concerned."

China, which has overtaken Japan as the main economic market for Asean countries, is Malaysia's fourth largest trading partner.

Liu said bilateral trade between Malaysia and China had increased by 41 per cent to US\$20.01 billion (RM76 billion) last year.

"Against our total trade of US\$850

billion we are confident of improving our trade volume with Malaysia."

Last year alone Malaysians invested in 350 projects worth US\$1 billion while Chinese investments in Malaysia totalled US\$3.1 million.

"The Chinese government will encourage Chinese enterprises to consider Malaysia in their expansion of businesses."

China's healthy economic growth, he said, has also affected the performance of its neighbouring countries including Japan, the second biggest economy in the world, which shot up by 6.4 per cent last year.

China's economy has been overheating since the fourth quarter of last year, recording a GDP growth of 9.1 per cent and it has been estimated that it could grow more than nine per cent this year.

He said while Malaysia was China's biggest trading partner within the Asean framework, it has also become a top choice for Chinese outbound tourists.

On Abdullah's visit, he said a number of activities has been lined up and these include an economic forum, launch of a cultural week as well as a badminton match between top notch players of both countries.