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| Newspaper | New Straits Times |
| Date | 26/4/2011 |

Wen: Malaysia a good brother

BELING: Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao has described Malaysia as a "good brother and close neighbour", adding that bilateral relations between the two countries are "bright".

He said this in a special interview with Bernama and other media representatives ahead of his official visit to Malaysia and Indonesia beginning today.

Wen said he believed Malaysia and China had a bright future together because of the historical links and mutual trust between the two countries.

When it comes to Malaysia-China relations, he recalled two important episodes — Malaysia being the first Asean country to establish diplomatic ties with China and the role Malaysia played in building on Asean-China relations.

"We have never forgotten these historical episodes," Wen said at Ziguange, Zhongnanhai, where Chinese leaders often meet their foreign guests.

On efforts to strengthen Malaysia-China relations in the years ahead, Wen said it must be based on mutual trust.

"The Chinese have a saying, 'When developing a relationship, it is essential that we increase mutual communication so that we can have mutual trust'. It is essential that we tell people what is truly on our mind."

Wen pointed out that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, in an official visit to China in June 2009, also said the future success of bilateral ties between Malaysia and China must be based on trust.

"We need to enhance our cooperation in business, science and technology, and education. Malaysia has become China's biggest trading partner in Asean. According to China's statistics, our two-way trade reached US\$74.2 billion (RM221.9 billion) last year.

"What we need to do now is to sustain the momentum and have a balanced, coordinated and sustainable growth."

Wen said he noticed that there was much coverage in Malaysian newspapers recently on the signing of an agreement for the mutual recognition of academic degrees during his forthcoming visit to Malaysia.

"I believe the newspapers are paying so much attention to it because



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao promised to strengthen bilateral ties during Najib's official visit to China in 2009. — Bernama picture

"WHAT WE NEED TO DO NOW IS TO SUSTAIN THE MOMENTUM AND HAVE A BALANCED, COORDINATED AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH."

— Wen Jiabao
Chinese premier

exchanges between us in education and science and technology represent the future of our bilateral relationship."

He said China would also increase

its investment in Malaysia, including in key projects that were of special interest, such as the second Penang bridge, a paper mill in Sarawak and other infrastructure projects.

On territorial claims in the South China Sea and disputes between China and some Asean countries, Wen said: "Although both China and Malaysia have some disputes over the relevant islands and reefs in the South China Sea, the disputes have not impeded our efforts towards peaceful coexistence.

"We are of the view that the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea signed between China and Asean in 2002 should be adhered to.

The declaration takes the position that territorial disputes and disputes

over maritime rights and interests in the region are to be peacefully addressed.

"We disapprove of referring bilateral disputes to multilateral forums because it will only make the disputes bigger and more complicated."

He pledged that China would enhance cooperation with other countries to enhance security in the South China Sea and the Straits of Malacca.

On China-Asean relations, Wen said both sides had moved from a dialogue relationship to that of a good neighbour relationship and finally a strategic cooperation, and all of that in 20 years.

"We can work together in terms of the Free Trade Agreement, financial cooperation, infrastructure connectivity, and many other areas," he

said, adding that China-Asean cooperation would continue in the right direction.

He pointed out that the China-Asean Free Trade Area (CFTA) would bring benefits to both sides and that all countries should make full use of the favourable conditions, especially the preferential policies of the FTA.

Commenting on the recent involvement of the United States and Russia in the East Asia Summit, which had somewhat changed the East Asian cooperation structure, Wen said the summit should always allow Asean to play the lead role.

Wen said the summit should stick to its original aim, that is as a leaders' forum for all parties to work together in promoting stability, peace and cooperation.