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# PM: I helped mend foreign ties

Najib says he broke from past policies for benefit of the country

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**PUTRAJAYA:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said he made a clear break from Malaysia's past foreign policies when he took office, fostering ties that promoted peace, security and prosperity instead.

He said he believed that foreign policy should be about building partnerships to benefit the country and people instead of "insisting on awakening old quarrels or harping on old slights".

"While Malaysians are warm, approachable and collaboration-oriented people, for decades we had a leader who intentionally adopted confrontational foreign policy positions, perhaps for personal popularity," he said in an obvious reference to Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"But when I became Prime Minister, I chose to be different and make a clear break with past approaches," he told delegates of the biennial Commonwealth Association of Public Administration and Management (Capam).

From having to deal with "legacy issues" with Singapore, Malaysia's relations with its neighbour have since moved on to working together to build a high-speed railway between Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, he said.

With the Philippines, Malaysia



**Common mission:** Najib with (from left) Chief Secretary to Government Tan Sri Dr Ali Hamsa, Swaziland's King Mswati III, Commonwealth secretary-general Patricia Scotland and Capam CEO Gay Hamilton at the launch of the Capam biennial conference in Putrajaya.

facilitated negotiations to resolve Asia's longest-running insurgency, said Najib, adding that the Government had also worked with Indonesia, Myanmar and Bangladesh to address the issue of migrants at sea.

"Indeed, relations with our

friends across the continents have never been so warm. And these relationships have borne tangible results," the Prime Minister added.

The good relations, Najib said, were reflected in the growing trade between Malaysia and China, and the country became a signatory to

the Trans-Pacific Partnership on its own terms without sacrificing national interest.

"We decided that our foreign relations would no more be characterised by caustic words and barbed comments," he said.

If he had not forged an independ-

ent and neutral path, Najib said Malaysia would not have been able to reach out to the rebels in Ukraine to secure the wreckage, black boxes and the bodies of victims of flight MH17.

"We would never have been able to bring 28 countries together in an unprecedented coalition during the disappearance of flight MH370 unless we had pursued a policy of being open and friendly to all," he said.

Najib said while Malaysia believed in reaching out to other states, it was against foreign intervention in the domestic affairs of other countries, pointing out that the days when imperial powers told others how to behave were over.

Najib said innovation had not only brought resilience, growth and an inclusive model for the Malaysian economy, but was also the path that led the nation to reset its foreign relations, resulting in tremendous gain in terms of jobs, leverage and future prospects.

"We live in an age of a new equality between nations. And innovation, both in the public service and across our societies, is the key to unlocking the potential that countries across the Commonwealth possess in abundance," he concluded.