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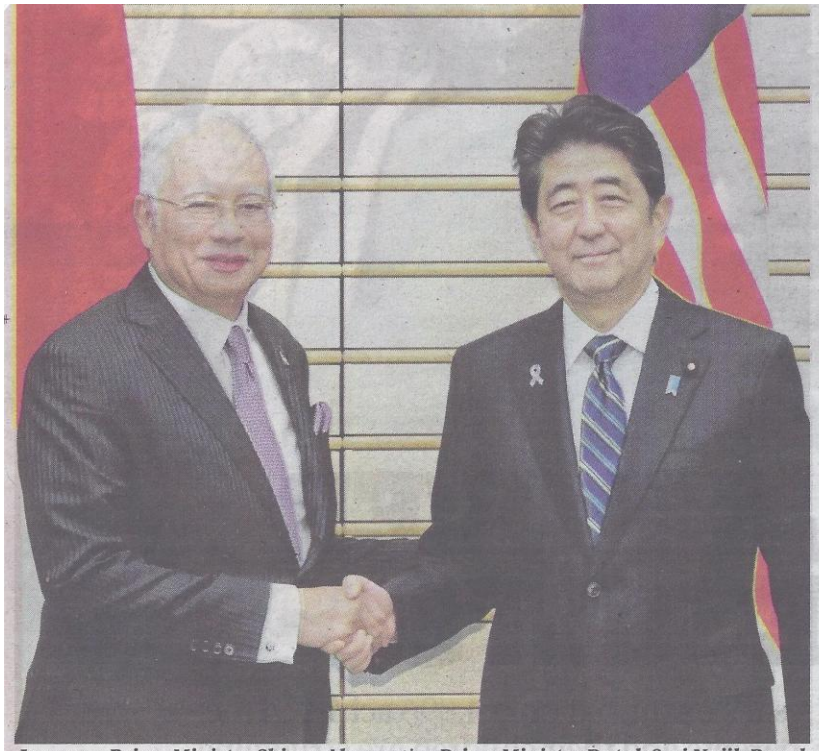

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe *greeting* ***Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak*** *at the* ***start of their bilateral talks*** *at the latter's official residence in Tokyo on Wednesday.* EPA pic

Chinese President Xi Jinping *greeting* ***Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak*** *at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in* ***Beijing*** *earlier this month.* Bernama pic

NST- 18/11/2016

Not zero-sum game, says PM after Japan, China trips

TOKYO: Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe began and ended his joint press conference with Datuk Seri Najib Razak on Wednesday by referring to the Malaysian leader as his "close friend".

And Najib responded by calling Abe as "my good friend". He closed the proceedings by saying: "I look forward to working closely with Prime Minister Abe in the future."

Expanding the subject further at his meeting with the Malaysian media covering his trip, Najib said he had no problems with Abe.

"He is very warm, he has problems with other countries of course, but what is important is our relationship with Japan."

He said there was a strong level of trust and sincerity between him and Abe.

But he stressed improving relationship with one country did not mean it was at the expense of another country.

"It's not a zero-sum game," he said.

He said being close to China, Malaysia's biggest trading partner, did not preclude Malaysia from developing ties with Japan, the biggest foreign investor in Malaysia, and the United States.

And, he said, this goodwill would surely be expanded to US president-elect Donald Trump. "You like it or not, he is the new president."

Interestingly, Najib recalled a photograph of him and Trump, with the words inscribed as "To my favourite PM".

Najib said: "I kept it next to my chair for some reason, two years ago when he did not even think of running and it has remained there since then."

Najib is especially close to the current top China leadership, with his recent official visit to China being elevated to the level of a state visit and returning home with record deals.

And Japan, which marks 60 years of diplomatic ties with Malaysia next year, did not want to be left out in case Malaysia tilts too much to Beijing.

Abe's invitation for Najib's visit to Japan this week only came in late October, a week before Najib left for China. It was personally handed over to Najib by Abe's envoy who flew to Kuala Lumpur.

Najib accepted it despite his extra-tight commitment, where he, like Abe, has to be in Lima, Peru, for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit this weekend.

There are also a lot of similarities between Najib and Abe. Both are about the same age and both are political blue bloods.

Abe's grandfather, Kan Abe, and father, Shintaro Abe, were both politicians. Abe's mother, Yoko Kishi, is the daughter of Nobusuke Kishi, the prime minister of Japan from 1957 to 1960.