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Down to the last detail

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SIGNIFICANT: Najib highlights German precision as he ends 3-day trip



Reporting from Berlin

GERMAN precision was at work when Malaysian diplomats received a last-minute “cue” from German protocol ahead of the official welcoming ceremony for Datuk Seri Najib Razak at Chancellor Angela Merkel’s office.

The Germans told the Malaysian officials that the prime minister should depart the Ritz-Carlton hotel at 11.53am instead of 11.54am for the chancellery building seven minutes away.

Merkel, in a cream jacket, appeared sharp at noon to welcome her Malaysian guest at the chancellery courtyard, overlooking the imposing Reichstag (German Parliament) building.

The Germans’ precision and other good values were not the only thing that caught Najib’s attention, a point that he raised when he later met a group of Malaysians working or

studying in Germany.

Another point was the significance of Najib’s visit itself. It has been a long time since *Negaraku* filled the air in the seat of the German government here.

The last official visit by a Malaysian leader to Germany was 11 years ago, when Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi came in 2005.

Najib said he had goosebumps when the German military band played the national anthem, using only wind instruments, minus the usual drums and other percussions.

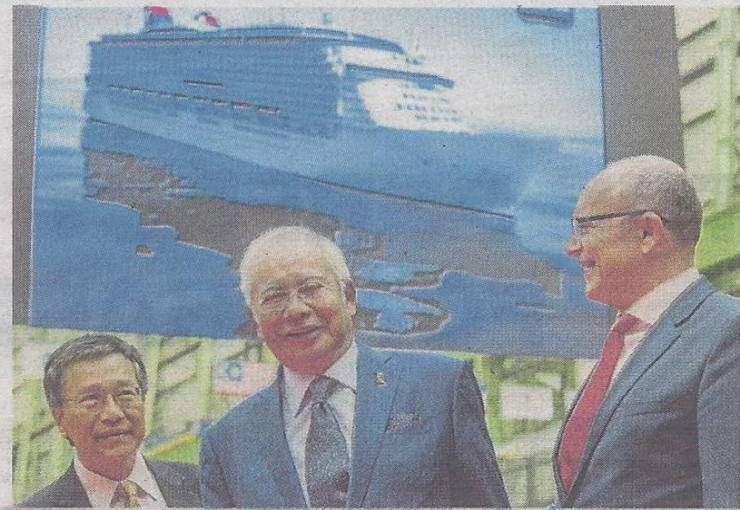
The Malaysian officials admitted that Putrajaya may have taken Malaysian-German diplomatic ties for granted, judging by the lack of top-level engagements. This could be due to the fact that there was strong business and economic co-operation.

For first-time visitors to Berlin, it is hard to describe how this once-divided city has mushroomed since the Reunification some 26 years ago. Some Berliners feel that the city is like one of those that are constantly changing and permanently on the verge of becoming the next big thing.

It is definitely cheaper than London, grittier than Paris and trendier than Rome, buzzing with artists, students and musicians.

One foreigner turned Berliner said the city was like one giant university, where every person seemed to be starting their thesis, completing their second degree or involved in some form of research.

How would Berliners describe the



Prime Minister **Datuk Seri Najib Razak**, Genting Group chairman and chief executive **Tan Sri Lim Kok Thay** and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern State Premier **Erwin Sellering** at the **MV Werften** shipyards in **Wismar**, northern Germany. AFP pic

city in three words? “Evolving”, “historical” and “cultural” could be the answer.

Najib later confided that he found bilateral talks with Merkel to be really engaging, frank and fulfilling. Merkel even inquired about Islam, and how Malaysian civil and syariah courts worked.

The former research scientist, who has been chancellor since 2005 and leader of the Christian Democratic Union since 2000, also used her “environment” cap to probe Najib over oil palm practices.

After all, she was the environment minister in 1994 under then chancellor Helmut Kohl.

Merkel, who has also been described as the de facto leader of the European Union, told the media after her talks with Najib that the Malaysian leader had assured her that Malaysia was no longer using slash-and-burn methods to create areas for oil palm cultivation.

Najib used the meeting to invite representatives of the German Bun-

destag (Parliament) to visit Malaysia to see for themselves the progress that the country had made in the area. He stressed that the Malaysian palm oil industry was committed to sustainability.

The rule of law, fight against corruption, and situation of religious minorities, on the one hand, and Muslims in Malaysia, on the other, were additional subjects discussed in the talks, reported Merkel.

“We hope Malaysia continues to make good progress, enabling civil society to develop well and human rights to be accepted, too.”

But, Najib, in turn, has a lot of praise for her refugee policy.

“I would like to take this opportunity to compliment the federal chancellor on the role that Germany has played in taking in refugees.”

Before returning home from the German trip, Najib visited a Genting ship-building company near here, feeling really inspired that when it comes to business, the Germans can deliver, and with precision.