

# The fruitful journey of M'sia-China diplomacy

**PETALING JAYA:** A crowd of 10,000 people, led by the then Chinese vice-premier Li Xiannian, got together at Peking Airport, now Beijing Capital International Airport, to welcome Tun Abdul Razak Hussein and his entourage on May 28, 1974.

It was the second Malaysian Prime Minister's maiden visit to China.

Changan Avenue, the main street of the Chinese capital, was filled with a riot of colours with rolls and rolls of overhead streamers strung across the wide boulevard.

"Differences in ideology, size and approaches to some international issues should not present obstacles to the development of fruitful relations and beneficial cooperation between Malaysia and China.

"Malaysian foreign policy seeks to avoid tension, to strengthen international cooperation and to bring about a greater awareness of the common interest of every country in a peaceful, just and equitable international order," Abdul Razak was reported as saying at a banquet hosted by Chinese premier Zhou Enlai.

China had viewed the importance of the new friendship with Malaysia, and that Zhou, who was critically ill then, made the effort to personally welcome his guests and participated in talks towards



**Momentous:** The historic visit when diplomatic relations began captured on the front page of 'The Star' on June 1, 1974.

the creation of Malaysia-China diplomatic relations.

That was the last diplomatic function of Zhou, who was admitted to hospital a day after signing the documents on May 31, and stayed there until he died from bladder cancer on Jan 8, 1976. He was 77.

During his stay in Beijing and Shanghai from May 28 to June 2, Abdul Razak was also received by chairman Mao Zedong.

This mileage achieved by



**Strong allies:** Anwar paying a courtesy visit to China President Xi Jinping at the Great Hall of The People in Beijing. - Prime Minister's Office

Malaysia and China captured the headlines of *The Star* for seven consecutive days while the newspapers in China, particularly the *People's Daily*, had also given prominence reports on the spectacular journey.

Forty-nine years down the road, the relationship has been taken to a higher level with both nations elevating it to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in 2013.

The close collaboration has bore fruit, with China becoming the largest trading partner of

Malaysia for 14 consecutive years.

The bilateral trade in 2022 achieved a record high of US\$203.6bil (RM910.8bil).

Over the decades, there were frequent exchanges of high-level visits of top leaders from both nations.

The latest was the official visit of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to Beijing and Hainan in late March, which saw the inking of 19 memorandums of understanding worth a total of RM170bil.

Apart from this, the strong

bond has also led to the opening of the Malaysia-China Kuantan Industrial Park, China-Malaysia Qin Zhou Industrial Park, Xiamen University Malaysia - the first overseas campus of the renowned Chinese higher education institution and many more.

The boost in tourism promotions have also seen the increase in movement of people between the two nations. In 2019, a total of 2.41 million Chinese tourists came to Malaysia and 1.38 million Malaysians visited China.