

## 'EXTRAORDINARY JOURNEY'

# Celebrating 50 years of Malaysia-China ties

**T**ODAY marks the 50th anniversary of the People's Republic of China and Malaysia establishing diplomatic ties.

Despite differences in political structure and social settings, the two countries have made their relations a big success based on mutual trust and ready assistance to each other. This model has been recognised as an exemplar of country-to-country relations and inter-civilisational interactions.

Going back 50 years, Beijing was in its early summer. Joyful spirits were everywhere. The brightly coloured Five-Star Red Flag and the Stripes of Glory briskly fluttered in main streets and huge banners with "Long live China-Malaysia friendship!" were emblazoned on tall buildings.

Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, Malaysia's prime minister at the time, was making his ice-breaking visit to China. Chairman Mao Zedong and premier Zhou Enlai received him in Beijing. Zhou emotionally said, "Your Excellency, you are here finally! I have been expecting your visit for long". May 31, 1974, is a day to be remembered by history.



OUYANG  
YUJING

It was on this day that Zhou and Razak signed the Joint Communiqué, enabling Malaysia to be the first Asean founding member to establish diplomatic relations with China, ushering in a new era in the history of China-Malaysia relations and a new chapter in China-Asean relations.

China and Malaysia have had an extraordinary diplomatic journey together. The past 50 years have seen China and Malaysia reinforcing mutual trust and assistance.

Bilaterally, high-level exchanges have become increasingly frequent. Internationally, China and Malaysia have always supported each other on issues of core interests and major concerns.

Both firmly support the other in safeguarding their national

sovereignty, security and development rights, and the autonomy of choosing their own development path.

President Xi Jinping made his historic visit to Malaysia in 2013, which resulted in the elevation of China-Malaysia relations to a comprehensive strategic partnership.

Last year, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim visited China twice and reached a consensus with Xi on jointly building the China-Malaysia community with a shared future, drawing the blueprint for China-Malaysia relations in the new era.

The past five decades, bilateral trade has grown from less than US\$200 million in 1974 to US\$190.24 billion in 2023, an increase of 950 times. China has been Malaysia's largest trading partner for 15 consecutive years and Malaysia has long been China's second-largest Asean-country trading partner.

Besides, China is Malaysia's long-standing major investor and Malaysia is China's largest Asean-country import source. The first quarter of this year saw bilateral trade reaching US\$47.08 billion and non-financial direct investment US\$723 million, ris-

ing 6.5 and 116 per cent respectively year-on-year. Both countries are now enjoying the sweet fruits of high-quality co-construction of Belt and Road projects.

Flagship projects such as the Two Countries, Twin Parks and the East Coast Rail Link have brought tangible benefits to both peoples. China is also deepening cooperation with Malaysia in the digital economy, green development and other emerging industries by supporting the New Industrial Master Plan 2030, the National Energy Transition Roadmap and other economic revitalisation measures.

The well-timed synergy of Chinese modernisation and Malaysia Madani has injected new momentum into the two countries' pursuit of common development and shared prosperity, which has also contributed significantly to global economic recovery.

There's a tightening of people-to-people bonds. Exchanges are extensively conducted in various fields, including, but not limited to, local affairs, science and education, and tourism and culture.

We are happy to see 18 pairs of

sister cities formed and eight consulate-generals set up, based in Penang, Kuching, Kota Kinabalu, Xi'an, Nanning, Kunming, Guangzhou and Shanghai.

University exchanges also play an active role. Beijing Foreign Studies University set up its "Centre for China-Malay Studies" in Beijing and Xiamen University opened its first overseas campus in Malaysia.

Back in 2019, when the world was still unaffected by Covid-19, cross-border visits between China and Malaysia totalled 3,795,800 and China remained Malaysia's largest non-Asean tourist source for seven consecutive years.

The end of last year saw implementation of visa-free policies by both countries and as a result, the average tourist arrivals from China have hit over 270,000.

China and Malaysia should strengthen high-level exchanges, deepen political mutual trust and enhance synergy of development and strategic cooperation. Jointly, we will make the next 50 years another glory in China-Malaysia relations.

The writer is China's ambassador to Malaysia