

Formal dinner an 'exceptional recognition from Xi'

SHANGHAI: Malaysia has been granted a significant honour from China during Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's third official visit to the republic.

Malaysian Ambassador to China Datuk Norman Muhammad said the republic had arranged for the Malaysian delegation to have a formal dinner hosted by Chinese President Xi Jinping on Nov 7.

Speaking to Malaysian media here, Norman said the prestigious gesture from the republic underscored the diplomatic relations between the countries.

"The gesture is an exceptional recognition from Xi, as he is hosting a dinner for the prime min-

ister, who is on an official visit.

"During a standard working visit, the prime minister would typically meet with officials of similar rank. However, on this occasion, he will meet with the president, who holds the position of head of state, and our prime minister serves as head of government.

"It is indeed a significant honour for a head of state to host a dinner specifically for a head of government, as working visits rarely involve such high-level formality, hence, the level of reception is notably elevated," he said.

Norman added that during the meeting with Xi, Anwar is also expected to extend an invitation

to Xi to attend the Asean Summit, which Malaysia chairs next year.

"The chances of Xi accepting the invitation are high, as China views Asean as an important organisation for ensuring security and stability in this region.

"Malaysia's relationship with China is also strong and close, and we can consider it to be mature. We have an understanding that allows us to compartmentalise our relationship, ensuring that one issue does not affect all others.

"While we may have differing views on certain matters, this does not disrupt cooperation in other areas, such as trade.

"Hence, I am confident that

one of the issues to be presented will be our chairmanship and perhaps the prime minister will invite Xi to attend the Asean Summit next year, as well as the Asean-GCC Summit."

Norman also said Malaysia had been recognised as the Country of Honour at the 7th China International Import Expo (CIIE), coinciding with the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

"Anwar will also be one of the first leaders to be honoured with the opportunity to deliver the keynote address at the event, following his counterpart Premier Li Qiang, and ahead of other foreign leaders."