

**Malaysia To Set Up Diplomatic Mission In Turkmenistan**  
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PUTRAJAYA, Dec 7 (Bernama) -- Malaysia will establish a diplomatic mission in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, in the third week of this month as testament of the country's commitment and desire to further enhance and consolidate its relations with Turkmenistan.

"I and President (Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov) had a very fruitful and productive discussion today, covering bilateral issues and how we can move forward and advance our bilateral ties.

"I am confident that his excellency's visit will add a lot more input as we move our bilateral ties to a new height," said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak in a joint press statement Wednesday.

Berdimuhamedov, is on a three-day state visit to Malaysia.

Najib said both leaders also discussed Petronas's extensive investment of US\$5.6 billion for the production of gas in the Caspian Sea.

"The president indicated his positive remarks relating to Petronas' involvement in the production of gas. Petronas hopes to double its gas production capacity, in the next to five years, to one billion standard cubic feet from the existing 500 million standard cubic feet.

"Malaysia stands ready to be your close partner. Probably, we will develop our bilateral link in existing and new areas but we will be your true partner in developing your country in the field of oil and gas," he added.

The prime minister said Petronas was also in the position to produce oil from the Caspian Sea, about 600km from the capital of Turkmenistan, Ashgabat.

He said Berdimuhamedov was also very kind to consider Petronas's request to set up a gas platform in the Caspian Sea based on the company's competitive offer.

"This is clear manifestation of the technological capabilities that we have developed over the years and based on his excellency's offer to us, Petronas stands ready to involve in downstream petrochemical operations in Turkmenistan," he added.

On human capital, Najib said Malaysia, through Petronas, had already trained about 110 Turkmenistan people.

"I have given an undertaking to his excellency that we will increase the number of Turkmenistan people to be trained by Petronas either here or in Turkmenistan," he added.

Najib also said Malaysia was ready to assist in the development of an oil and gas institute in Turkmenistan.

Petronas can both train Turkmenistan people and run the oil and gas institute, he said.

Najib said Malaysia was also looking forward to expand bilateral trade ties with Turkmenistan which he described was still "quite small".

In the first 10 months of the year, total trade stood at US\$18 million and the prime minister hoped it would increase by many folds in the future.

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