

Malaysia-South Africa Ties Need New Impetus - Najib

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BLOEMFONTEIN (SOUTH AFRICA), Jan 9 (Bernama) -- The long-standing Malaysia-South Africa ties are in need of new impetus in line with the current development, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said.

Najib described his visit to the country -- at the invitation of South African President Jacob Zuma in conjunction with the 100th anniversary of the African National Congress (ANC) -- as a symbol of Malaysia's desire to further strengthen the relations.

The prime minister said he accepted Zuma's invitation, made verbally and in writing during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (Chogm) in Perth, Australia last year, because Umno and the Malaysian government had been a strong supporter of the ANC's struggles against the Apartheid regime.

"We have been supporting their struggles politically, and in the 1994 South African (first multiracial democratic) election, we have assisted them in material terms, in the campaign as well as provided guidance on how to manage the election," he told Malaysian journalists covering his two-day visit here which ended Sunday.

The prime minister added that the foreign policy of the Malaysian government and Barisan Nasional (BN) was based on the humanitarian principles and that the government was willing to provide assistance "anywhere irrespective of race and religion." "We have been defending this policy all this while," he said.

On the ANC, Najib said, the party, just like Umno, needs to undergo a transition process from a party that has been struggling for freedom to one that needs to build a new nation.

"Unlike the time when they were fighting against the Apartheid, which required them to have a different set the skills and to have courage and strategy, now that they have a government and need to build a nation, the skills and strategy should also change, taking into account that the world has also changed," he said.

In the same context, he said, Umno as a party which had struggled to free Malaysia from colonial rule, had also made good of the country's independence by coming up with a host of development programmes which had brought about major changes to the country.

"However, as the party marches into the 21st century, we are faced with a new generation and this requires us to not to be merely contented with our past deeds; we should also be courageous to look into the future so that Umno and BN remain relevant in this era and in the future," he said.

Meanwhile, Kenya's vice-president Stephen Kolanzo Musyoka paid a courtesy visit on Najib, here.

Najib said during the 30-minute meeting, they discussed among other things, issues of mutual interest.

He said Musyoko had expressed admiration for the numerous economic development programmes being carried out by the Malaysian government, including the New Economic Model and the Economic Transformation Programme.

Musyoko had also expressed the intention to make Malaysia a model in developing his country, he said.

Najib and wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor later left for home from the Bloemspruit air base.

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