

DPM defends Putrajaya's ties with China, says Mat Sabu issue is 'internal'
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By Melissa Chi

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 13 — Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin defended his attendance at a dinner tonight with a senior official of the Communist Party of China as a meeting with Malaysia's top trading partner which should not be linked to Umno's attack against Mohamad Sabu.

"Our diplomatic relations with China are one of the best now and China is Malaysia's number one trading partner and second in terms of exports globally. We have close relations in trade and industry, investment. I don't see such issues as a hindrance.

Muhyiddin (right) with the CPC Committee of Shunyi District in China, with its secretary Dr Sun Zhengcai (centre) leading a 15-man trade delegation to Malaysia at a closed door meeting at the Shangri La Kuala Lumpur September 13, 2011.

"This international relation is normal, not just for Malaysia. Other democratic countries like America also have ties (with China) because international relations can bring us huge benefits, not that we embrace their ideology. That is their right, their country's business," he told reporters here today.

Muhyiddin is scheduled to host a dinner tonight for Sun Zhenglai, who is listed by national news service Bernama as a senior official of the Communist Party of China.

Umno and government leaders have singled out Mohamad, the PAS deputy president, for relentless attacks for his purported support of the communists in pre-independence Malaya.

The PAS No. 2, popularly known as Mat Sabu, had made remarks recently lamenting how other leaders who fought for independence were not properly recognised for their efforts, and reiterated his support for Mat Indera, a Malay leader who was part of a communist attack on the Bukit Kepong police station during the Emergency.

Communist insurgents attacked the police station on February 23, 1950 while the country was still under British rule.

"This has nothing to do with that issue (attack against Mat Sabu). Our country's relations with China are good. The question about Mat Sabu's comments is an internal issue," Muhyiddin said.

The deputy prime minister also said Mat Sabu should not twist historical fact for political gain and added that he should instead apologise and admit that he was wrong for making such remarks.

Muhyiddin stressed that diplomatic ties with certain countries should not be confused with their ideology, and that Malaysia's leaders should look at the bigger picture instead.

"So we have to be pragmatic in this issue. This is not the issue of ideology. To us, we have a bigger goal than the issue of ideology. We think of long-term benefits to the country, good relations with any country, and whatever their ideology is, it will not be a deterrent for us to

seize the benefits for the sake of the country.

“We have a parliamentary democracy system here. We do not accept their ideology but that is not a hindrance for us to have ties with such a country because we know there are many benefits. If we do not have good ties with China or any other country, it will be our loss,” he said.

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