

Najib Congratulates Newly-Elected Pope Francis I
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KUALA LUMPUR, March 15 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak Friday congratulated Pope Francis I over his election as the new leader of the Roman Catholic Church.

"On behalf of the Malaysian Government and the people of Malaysia, in particular Malaysians of the Roman Catholic faith, I am pleased to extend my heartiest congratulations and best wishes on Your Holiness' election as the 266th Holy Roman Pontiff," he said in his letter to the Pope, which was made available to Bernama here Friday.

The prime minister expressed hope that the diplomatic relations established in 2011 between Malaysia and the Holy See -- the universal government of the Catholic Church -- would continue to prosper and strengthen under Pope Francis' papacy.

"Our bilateral ties have flourished since the historic establishment of our diplomatic relations in 2011.

"It is my sincere hope that under Your Holiness' papacy, our warm and cordial relations will continue to prosper and strengthen," said Najib.

Najib said Malaysia was keen to work with the Holy See to foster greater understanding and harmony among the different religions through Malaysia's initiative to promote moderation through the Global Movement of Moderates.

Pope Francis, whose real name is Jorge Mario Bergoglio, 76, is from Argentina.

He was elected the 266th Holy Roman Pontiff Thursday and became the first non-European pontiff in nearly 1,300 years.

He succeeds Pope Benedict XVI who stepped down on Feb 28, after nearly eight years in office - the first pontiff to do so in 600 years.

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