

Najib Calls First Visit To Vietnam A Success

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By Rhoma Ahmad Razali

HANOI, April 5 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak has described his first official visit to Vietnam as a success after achieving various agreements with his Vietnamese counterpart, especially in strengthening bilateral ties.

He said the pacts were seen as having a major implication when Malaysia and Vietnam agreed to raise their current ties into a strategic partnership.

"Both foreign ministers of Malaysia and Vietnam will look into the detailed elements of the strategic partnership.

"After signing the strategic partnership, the pact will give a clearer direction of the priority areas of cooperation," he told Malaysian journalists after chairing a meeting with Vietnamese and Malaysian industry players, here, today.

Najib completed his three-day visit to Vietnam Saturday.

Najib who arrived on Thursday after taking an eight-hour flight from Perth, Australia, was accorded an official welcoming ceremony at the Presidential Palace here and paid a courtesy call on his counterpart Nguyen Tan Dung at the Vietnamese prime minister's office.

This was followed by a bilateral talk on issues of mutual interest and international developments.

Najib found the meeting with his counterpart fruitful as both sides agreed to step up bilateral trade.

He said both countries agreed to expand trade and investment as well as on the target to raise the value of bilateral trade to US\$11 billion (RM36.3 billion) by 2015 from around US\$9 billion (RM29.7 billion) currently.

Both countries also agreed to expand cooperation to cover agriculture in which a memorandum of understanding was signed.

Najib said an agreement was also reached on strengthening cooperation in banking, education, tourism, defence, security and in the oil and gas industry as well as on Vietnamese workers in Malaysia.

He said in his meeting with his Vietnamese counterpart yesterday, he also put on record Malaysia's appreciation of the Vietnamese government for its assistance in the search operation for the missing Malaysia Airlines MH370 jetliner.

"I also expressed our appreciation of Vietnam's support for Malaysia's candidacy for a seat in the United Nations Security Council for the 2015-2016 term," he said.

Asked on the courtesy calls on Vietnamese President Truong Tan Sang and Vietnamese Communist

Party secretary-general Nguyen Phu Trong, Najib said both leaders warmly welcomed his visit.

He said they in fact saw Malaysia as a model for Vietnam in several aspects and hoped that bilateral relations between the two countries could strengthen further.

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