

## **Najib Meets Chinese President**

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**By D. Arul Rajoo**

BEIJING, May 30 (Bernama) -- Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak Friday met Chinese President Xi Jinping at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse here.

Both Leaders, accompanied by several ministers, held a bilateral meeting for about an hour where they touched on the achievements and progress made since both countries established diplomatic ties 40 years ago, and the future direction to be taken.

In his opening remark, Xi expressed his gratitude for the warm reception he received during his visit to Malaysia last October, and sent his regard to Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Sultan Halim Muadzam Shah.

Xi also touched on the missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370, saying that China would continue to assist Malaysia in searching for the flight that went missing on March 8 with 239 people on board, including 154 Chinese nationals.

"We hope the cooperation will continue until we find the plane," he said.

Najib, who arrived in China on Tuesday, said he was looking forward to the visit as it brought back the memory of his father and Second Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak Hussein's historic visit to Beijing 40 years ago.

"I have been looking forward to this visit for a long time as this commemorates the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties. I hope this visit will further strengthen our two countries' relationship," he said.

In 1974, the late Abdul Razak had marked the beginning of a historic era when he first forged bilateral ties with China, at a time when the country was still entrenched in its closed-door policy to most of the world.

Malaysia was the first ASEAN country to establish diplomatic ties with China during the era of the Cold War of the 1960s and 1970s.

Najib also gave his assurance Malaysia would continue the effort to search for the missing Malaysia Airlines (MAS) flight MH370 with the assistance of China, Australia and other countries.

Also present were Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman, Prime Minister's Special Envoy to China Tan Sri Ong Ka Ting, International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed, Melaka Chief Minister Datuk Idris Haron, and MCA President Datuk

Seri Liow Tiong Lai.

Meanwhile, in an advertorial carried in the People's Daily, Friday, Najib said he believed that Malaysia and China would continue to be, not just friends, but partners for peace and prosperity.

He said it was his firm belief that relations between them would remain strong in the next 40 years.

"In forty years' time, in the 2050s, we will be in the middle of the 'Asian Century'. China will undoubtedly be the world's biggest economic power, and Malaysia will be a mature, developed nation," he said.

Najib also wrote about the foresight of his father, Malaysia's second prime minister Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, in establishing diplomatic relations with China in 1974 when Malaysia was a relatively new country, having achieved independence less than 20 years earlier.

"The establishment of diplomatic relations was a momentous event - indeed, Malaysia was the first Southeast Asian country to recognise the People's Republic of China," he said.

He said that four decades later, Malaysia had been transformed from a predominantly agrarian nation to a modern, industrialised country, well on its way to developed-nation status.

China, too, had changed beyond recognition, and is now the world's second largest economy.

"It has re-emerged as a great power in a new, multipolar world order. While our countries, and the world, have changed considerably, one thing has remained constant: the strong bond of friendship between our two peoples," he said.

The friendship, he said, has produced economic success as China was Malaysia's top trading partner, with bilateral trade at US\$106 billion (RM340 billion) last year.

Najib said investments between the two nations were also on the rise, and added that Chinese foreign direct investment in Malaysia had reached US\$920 million (RM295 billion) in 2013.

He said that people-to-people exchanges were also stronger than ever and Malaysia's Chinese community ensured that Malaysia always had a special link with China.

"There is perhaps no better symbol of our friendship than the arrival from China of two giant pandas, which now happily reside in Zoo Negara - and which have become an instant hit with the Malaysian public," he said.

But despite the strong bonds between them, Najib said, unexpected challenges do occur, and pointed to the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370 - with 154 Chinese nationals on board - on March 8.

He said the tragedy had been exceptionally difficult for Malaysia, but even in such challenging circumstances, the friendship had won through.

"I am very grateful for the contribution made by China - both in terms of expertise and technical know-how, and the assets China contributed to the search operation, including search aircraft and ships," he said.

Malaysia was indebted to many countries for their help in the search for MH370, such as Australia which had led the search operation off Perth, said Najib, adding that Malaysia was especially grateful to China.

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