

**Malaysia-China Ties Will Flourish Further, Says Najib
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By D. Arul Rajoo**

BEIJING, May 31 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak is confident the strong Malaysia-China relationship developed over the past 40 years would grow even closer in the future.

Speaking at the 40th anniversary to commemorate the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two nations here today, he said good relations are easy when times are good; but true friendship was forged in difficult times.

Citing the historic event 40 years ago, Najib said his father and second prime minister Tun Abdul Razak set out on what he called a journey of goodwill, to sow the seeds of mutual understanding and trust.

"That journey led him here, to Beijing, and to this very hall. It was here that he signed an agreement with Premier Zhou Enlai, formally establishing diplomatic ties between our countries. It was here that we began a new chapter in our relations.

"And it is here today that I feel not just the responsibility of the government, but the responsibility to my father

to continue his legacy and ensure the deepening of Malaysia-China ties," he said.

Present at the event were Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and over 300 guests.

Elaborating on the events that led to the historic establishment of diplomatic ties, Najib said he had asked his father why he took such a bold decision.

"As a university student in 1974, I asked my father, why did you make that journey and establish diplomatic relations," he said.

His father's reply was because he considered Premier Zhou Enlai a man he could trust.

"At a time of upheaval and uncertainty, Malaysia and China laid the foundations of trust for a relationship which continues to this day."

Najib said it was not a surprise that Malaysia was the first Southeast Asian country to establish relations with China, despite some allies advising Tun Abdul Razak against the decision.

Over the past four decades, both nations have developed and have grown closer together,

he said pointing out that the world's second largest economy is Malaysia's largest trading partner while Malaysia is China's largest trading partner in Asean.

Both countries have formed a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for prosperity and growth, and last year signed a Five Year Development Programme for Economic and Trade Cooperation.

"As our economies grow, so too are the bonds between our people. Thousands of our students have made the journey to learn in a different culture, my own son included."

Najib said perhaps, there is no better symbol of their friendship than the recent arrival from China of two giant pandas, who have become an instant hit with the Malaysian people.

Despite the good times, challenges do occur like in all friendships, he said, citing the Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 that went missing on March 8 with 50 Malaysian passengers and crew and 154 Chinese passengers on board.

"Malaysia was deeply saddened by the tragic disappearance of Flight MH370. Facing a mystery without precedent, we were grateful for the support of the Chinese government, which has spared no expense in the search effort. We will not rest until the plane is found."

He also said the joint communiqué that he signed with his Chinese counterpart further broadens and deepens cooperation in all areas of mutual benefit

economic, tourism, financial services and cultural.

Both countries have also agreed to exchange more students, to work closely on disaster relief, and to preserve stability and security in the region.

"And it is here today that I feel not just the responsibility of the government, but the responsibility to my father, to continue his legacy and ensure the deepening of Malaysia-China ties," he added.

Najib affirmed that in years to come, Malaysia and China would remain partners for prosperity, connected by history and firm in their commitment to peace.

"The ties that bind us will bring stability for our region and opportunity for our citizens. For as the Chinese proverb says, 'If people are of one heart, even the yellow earth can become gold'," he added.

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