

**Malaysia's Foreign Policy Is Based On Principle - Najib
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KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 24 (Bernama) -- Malaysia's foreign policy is based on principle, that is supporting what is right and differing what is not right.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said based on this principle, Malaysia therefore did not really need to choose between the United States (US) and China.

"It is not as easy as choosing a football club. Manchester United for example...but jokes aside. We cannot decide and make a choice because look at the strength of both countries," he said.

Najib said this when he was asked who should Malaysia choose between USA and China by one of the delegates at Malaysian Student Leaders Summit 2014, organised by United Kingdom and Eire Council of Malaysian Students (UKEC), here Sunday.

Elaborating further, the Prime Minister said the United States had strength such as a big market, technology, innovation, some of the best education institutions in the world, and also super power and hyper power.

Najib said China was also an integral part of Asia and they were the nation's largest trading partner with US\$100 billion in two-way trade, which Malaysia was pushing to US\$160 billion in five years time.

"So, why do we need to confront the United States, at the same time we have China?," he said adding that Malaysia had a very independent foreign policy.

He said if Malaysia were beholdng to the United States, for example, it would never deal with (Alexander) Borodai (separatist forces leader) for the bodies of the MH17 victims to be taken out from the crash site in Eastern Ukraine.

"If we are beholdng to the US, I would not have visited Gaza, for example. I met the leader of Hamas. That is what I mean by principle-based foreign policy and at the same time a pragmatic one," he said.

Prime Minister said such a foreign policy would yield more benefits and a positive result.

Earlier in his opening address, Najib recalled the days when he was studying abroad and became the 'ambassador' for Malaysia to answer questions about the country, its culture and its people.

He said it was from there he learnt in depth about the different culture, the different perspective and different way of doing things.

"And I tried to bring the best of that knowledge home with me and to apply what I had learnt to my own life and my own career and I hope you will do the same because the knowledge and experiences you bring back will help shape the Malaysia of tomorrow," he added.

On the Goods and Services Tax (GST) which will be implemented in April next year, Najib said he was aware that some people disagreed with such policies and that was natural.

"Since the Economic Transformation Programme begun, our economy has gone from strength to strength. Household income is 24 percent higher than it was in 2009.

"Our budget deficit is falling, it is now 3.9 percent, lower than our own target. We are on the way to a balanced budget by 2020," he said.

On Malaysia's Chairmanship of Asean next year, Najib said Malaysia needed talented and dynamic people to take up the challenges.

"As Malaysia prepare to take on a leadership role amongst our friends and neighbours, I urge you to also explore the opportunities to lead in South East Asia so that we can show that Malaysia is not only ready to learn from the world, but stands ready to lead the world as well," he said.

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