

## **Turkmenistan's Permanent Neutrality Status Forges Closer Ties With Malaysia**

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**By Nabilah Saleh**

KUALA LUMPUR, May 8 (Bernama) -- Turkmenistan's permanent neutrality policy, which was adopted and recognised by the United Nations (UN) in December 1995, has played a significant role in engaging the nation with global countries, including Malaysia.

Turkmenistan's Ambassador to Malaysia Yazkuli Mammedov said that the country's neutral foreign policy has strengthened ties with Malaysia in various fields, especially since the recent introduction of direct flights from Ashgabat, the capital city of Turkmenistan, to Kuala Lumpur.

The direct flights, one of the initiatives under the leadership of Turkmenistan's President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov in the transport sector, would bring bilateral ties to greater heights, he told Bernama in a recent interview.

"Presently, both Malaysian and Turkmenistan ministries of foreign affairs and the respective embassies, have done their best to strengthen the friendship between two countries.

"Therefore, we are confident that the direct flights will bring more positive impact to both countries from the economics, political, social and cultural aspects," said the envoy, who also noted that this year marked the 20th anniversary of the country's neutral foreign policy.

Turkmenistan was the first in the world to obtain international status of neutrality through consensual agreement of all UN member states.

Malaysia was one of the first countries which supported Turkmenistan's idea of a neutrality policy.

To a question, Mammedov said that the status of neutrality for Turkmenistan was a "special way of national identification in the international community."

"Twenty years ago it was extremely important for a young nation, which just gained independence, to preserve a sufficient level of security.

"That is why we created an unprecedented mechanism of coordinating our neutral aspirations with the international community," he said.

Malaysia and Turkmenistan have enjoyed close and warm relations since diplomatic relations were established in 1992. Turkmenistan is Malaysia's third largest trading partner in the Central Asian region.

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