

Malaysia-Saudi Arabia Ties at the Highest Level

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From Abdul Muin Abdul Majid

RIYADH, March 3 (Bernama) -- Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud views relations between Malaysia and the kingdom as being at the highest level, and are set to deepen further going forward.

This acknowledgment was conveyed to Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak who had an audience with the Saudi monarch at the latter's residence here on Wednesday.

"What the king told me was that he is very satisfied with how things stand in terms of ties between our two countries," Najib told a media conference Wednesday night as he concluded a working visit to Saudi Arabia which began on Feb 29.

He noted that King Salman was also impressed with what Malaysia had achieved as a country, something that Saudi Arabia held in high regard.

Najib said that on behalf of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah, he extended an invitation for the Saudi Arabian king to make a state visit to Malaysia.

Sharing further details on what transpired at yesterday's event, Najib said he was astonished to see the presence of a sizeable number of Saudi royals, Cabinet members and high-ranking military officials at the luncheon following his audience with King Salman.

His take on this was that it could well be a signal on the level of importance attached by the Saudis to ties between Riyadh and Kuala Lumpur.

The prime minister said he harboured hopes that the special relations between the two countries would translate into aspects that could further benefit Malaysians.

During the audience, Najib said he expressed Malaysia's appreciation over the hospitality and assistance accorded by Saudi Arabia to Malaysian haj and umrah pilgrims.

He noted that Malaysia had benefited from special considerations on these matters.

The prime minister said linkages between the two countries had evolved to reflect current concerns in the form of security threats posed by militant group Daesh, not only to Saudi

Arabia but also Malaysia and the Southeast Asian region and beyond.

"I shared with King Salman about how Daesh had managed to attract to its cause Malaysians in Malaysia as well as Malaysians who have joined the group in Syria and Iraq," he said.

Najib also mentioned that Saudi Arabia was a land of opportunity with many Malaysians having found employment in this country.

"Many of our professionals have secured well-paying jobs here, and this can only be beneficial to Malaysia, generally speaking," he said.

On the economic front, Najib said he was pleased that Malaysian company Prasarana won the contract last year for the operation and maintenance of the Arafah-Mina Metro system.

"We're now focusing on the bid to become the operator of the new Jeddah international airport," he said, adding that Malaysia had good credentials as airport operator in the form of Malaysia Airports Holdings Berhad.

He said the company operates the Istanbul Sabiha Gokcen International Airport in Turkey, as well as many airports in Malaysia itself.

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