

Cuba and Malaysia Enjoy Strong Relations - Ambassador

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KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 21 (Bernama) -- Cuba and Malaysia today enjoy fruitful relations which, among others, could be attributed to former president Fidel Castro's vision for stronger bilateral relations between the two countries.

Cuba's ambassador to Malaysia, Ibete Fernandez Hernandez said Castro who turned 90 last Aug 13, made an official visit to the country in 2001 and then in 2003 for the Non-Aligned Summit which Malaysia hosted that year.

"According to former president Fidel Castro, he was motivated to come to Malaysia to know more about 'its people, its ancient culture, its tradition of struggle, its beautiful nature and its fertile and creative work in the field of economic and social development'," she told Bernama in a recent interview.

Hernandez said Havana and Kuala Lumpur had signed an economic, scientific and cultural cooperation agreement in 2001.

"Later, it was given content through the credit offered by the Malaysian government to buy computers and palm oil," she said.

Hernandez also noted the collaboration in the field of sports and biotechnology as well as in research and commercialisation of vaccines between Cuba and Malaysia.

Besides that, to date 32 Malaysians have graduated as medical doctors from universities in Cuba, an island nation of some 12 million people located in the Caribbean, with full scholarship from the Cuban government.

She also noted the training provided in various fields to Cubans through the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP).

Hernandez said she recently met Tourism and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz where both sides discussed prospects of cooperation in tourism, a sector in which Malaysia had huge experience.

Cuba and Malaysia established diplomatic relations in 1975.

Hernandez said that since then, the two nations had made progress in their bilateral ties, both politically and economically.

"From 1997, high-level delegation visits in both directions contributed to boosting the links between the two nations, as well as South-South cooperation," she said.

Current Cuban president Raul Castro, then as first deputy president, visited Malaysia in 2005.

Malaysian prime ministers visited Cuba in 1997, 2000, 2004 and 2006.

"Cuba is waiting to be honored with the future visit of Prime Minister (Datuk Seri) Najib Tun Razak," said Hernandez.

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