

King Salman's Visit Reaffirms Ties - Najib

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak with Saudi Arabia's King Salman Abdulaziz Al-Saud during Najib's working visit to the kingdom in March last year - Bernama Picture KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 24 (Bernama) -- Saudi Arabia's King Salman Abdulaziz Al-Saud's visit to Malaysia reaffirms a partnership and brotherhood built on mutual trust and respect, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

He said this could provide an example for the Muslim world and beyond, for the benefit of the peoples and regions involved as well as the world.

"We are also proud that Saudi Arabia and Malaysia have cooperated so strongly to maintain the well-being of, and provide leadership for, the ummah," he said.

Najib alluded to both countries' strong mutual commitment to fight extremism founded on their strong belief in the tolerant, moderate and peaceful nature of authentic Islam.

The prime minister said this in a statement ahead of the four-day state visit by the Saudi monarch from Sunday at the invitation of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong XV Sultan Muhammad V.

He said Kuala Lumpur was honored that King Salman had chosen Malaysia for his first visit to an Islamic country in the region, as well as the first to Southeast Asia since ascending the throne.

Najib said a number of new agreements and memorandums of understanding would be signed during the visit - one of them involves Saudi Aramco and Malaysia's Petronas.

The prime minister also noted that the two countries were bounded together by strong trading links and ever increasing people-to-people exchanges.

He said bilateral trade had been on a strong upwards trajectory in recent years, increasing by 27.8 per cent in 2016 alone, to a total of RM13.99 billion.

"Today, Saudi Arabia is one of Malaysia's largest trading partners," he said, adding that Saudi Arabia investment in Malaysia was expected to create thousands of jobs.

Najib also spoke about Malaysia's pride when its firms had been chosen to undertake projects at some of the most prestigious locations in Saudi Arabia.

This, he said, included operating and maintaining the Al Mashaer Al Mugaddassah Metro Southern Line in Makkah, a shuttle train exclusively for pilgrims and working on the Jamarat Bridge and surrounding area in Mina.

"It is also a matter of pride for us that a Malaysian was part of the team that designed the magnificent Makkah Royal Hotel Clock Tower that faces the Masjid al-Haram," the prime minister said.

He said the warmth between two countries was reflected by the fact that Malaysia welcomed over 100,000 visitors from Saudi Arabia last year, a record high, while students from Malaysia and Saudi Arabia benefit from studying in each others' countries.

Najib also noted that spiritual ties between the two countries dated back centuries.

"For Muslim Malaysians, Saudi Arabia as the land of the Two Holy Mosques is the holiest of places and performing the Haj is both a sacred duty and the highlight of a lifetime," he added.

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