

**US- China Ties Most Consequential Relationship In 21st Century -- US Expert
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WASHINGTON, Feb 10 (Bernama) -- On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of former US President Richard Nixon's visit to China, the main interpreter for him during his historic visit described US-China ties as the most consequential relations in the 21st century.

In a recent interview with Xinhua, Charles Freeman Jr, a prominent "China hand" and a former US ambassador to Saudi Arabia, believed that the US-China relationship is the "basic underpinning of global economic prosperity" and "an essential prop of peace."

As the world moves toward a "more pluralistic and balanced" global order, China is expected to play a huge international role, which, Freeman hoped, would be played in cooperation with the United States.

"I had spent my life trying to ensure that the cooperation was strong and competition was less," he said.

Recalling Nixon's historic visit, he said he could not forget that chilly gray Monday morning on Feb 21, 1972, when he first set foot on the old Hongqiao airport terminal in Shanghai.

He recalled that in his first encounter with the "mysterious land" his eyes were drawn to a billboard at the airport reading "We have friends all over the world." But judging from the presence of birds and absence of aircraft, he quickly deduced that few foreign friends of China travelled to China by air at that time, he said.

Freeman described Nixon's visit to China as a "novel experience" and a "fascinating moment of mutual discovery."

Despite the previous meetings of officials from both sides in Geneva and Warsaw, it was Nixon's visit that truly brought the contact between China and the United States to a "broader level," he added.

When asked about the prospects of China-US relations, Freeman was optimistic, expecting major increases in the cooperation in investment, trade, economic and other arenas.

In terms of challenges, Freeman observed that China's rise has caused "frictions, misunderstanding and even suspicion and perhaps a measure of hostility" between the two countries.

However, all of these are perfectly normal, said Freeman.

He viewed the upcoming visit by Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping to the United States as "a reaffirmation of Sino-US relations."

He suggested that both sides "refrain from automatically assigning blame to each other... remain calm, cool and collected and consider carefully what the facts are before leaping to conclusions."

To build a cooperative Sino-US relationship, the responsibilities lay in the hands of leaders from both countries, Freeman said.

To illustrate changes in the past 40 years in China, he shared his own experience when he was a minister of the American Embassy in Beijing.

"When the American Chamber of Commerce was first founded in Beijing, all of the members used to meet in my living room. And now there are over 10,000 members," he said.

"The extent to which China was able to use its new contacts with the United States to educate its new generation abroad, to adopt policies that would spur economic growth and to take a new course, which Deng Xiaoping favored, really startled everybody," he added.

In his view, US-China relations have undergone tremendous transformation from a "purely practical maneuver" to address geopolitical concerns from both sides, to "the most consequential" bilateral ties in the 21st century.

Along with the evolution of the US-China ties, China has also experienced, in the last three decades, explosive economic growth and major transformation, he said.

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