

RECEPTION ON THE OCCASION OF THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN CHINA AND MALAYSIA

22/05/2014

SHANGRI-LA HOTEL, KUALA LUMPUR

His Excellency Dr. Huang Huikang,
Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Malaysia;

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Assalamu'alaikum, a very good evening and Salam 1 Malaysia.

1. Allow me to begin by extending my sincere appreciation to the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Malaysia, for inviting me to this memorable reception to commemorate the 40th Anniversary of the establishment of the diplomatic relations between Malaysia and the People's Republic of China. It is a delightful sight to see everyone converge here this evening in celebrating a milestone so significant, so meaningful and so momentous between our two countries.

2. In any friendship, it always starts simple. You get to know a person, you get comfortable with that person, you learn his or her traits, personality, his likes and dislikes, and you build up the relationship from there. Over time, the feeling evolves into something more; that initial friendship turns into something closer, stronger and more meaningful.

3. The Chinese has a saying : journey of a thousand miles starts with a first step. China and Malaysia have started this journey together 600 years ago, when the Malacca Sultanate established friendly ties with the Ming Dynasty in the 15th century. This friendship was rekindled and fortified 40 years ago and to this day our relations have been solid and strong and have evolved into a comprehensive strategic partnership in all sectors of our bilateral cooperation.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

4. Ambassador Huang would also concur with me if I were to say that our two countries have proven to each other to be good neighbours, good friends and

good partners, who have gone through thick and thin together. Our bond of friendship has been tested by time over the years, and each time, we passed with flying colours and stronger.

5. The decision by Malaysia's second Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak to establish diplomatic ties with China in 1974 had proven to be a historic milestone in Malaysia's nation building. His mission to Beijing was "a journey of goodwill and friendship to sow the seeds of mutual understanding between Malaysia and China. The signing of the Joint Communiqué had opened a new chapter in our relations, and had led us to ink numerous bilateral agreements and MoUs that facilitate our relations further which moved from strength to strength.

6. Today, the people of Malaysia and China are reaping the benefits from Tun Razak's journey of goodwill to Beijing in 1974. China is now Malaysia's largest trading partner globally and Malaysia is China's biggest trading partner among ASEAN countries. Malaysia is the third Asian country to have annual trade volume with China exceeding US\$ 100 billion, after Japan and South Korea.

7. Our two countries have developed and built mutual respect and understanding, confidence and strengthen our economic collaboration. Through our common endeavours, we have galvanised and generated economic opportunities, leading to stronger diplomatic ties between our two countries.

8. The signing of the Five Year Programme for Economic and Trade Cooperation between Malaysia and China (2013-2017) on 4 October 2013 witnessed by Prime Minister Dato' Sri Mohd Najib Razak and President Xi Jinping has provided a clear direction and priorities of Malaysia-China trade and economic cooperation.

9. The Programme maps out the economic and trade cooperation between Malaysia and China in the next five years and helps the business communities of Malaysia and China to identify opportunities for them to venture together or expand their businesses.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

10. The year 2014 has been designated by both the Governments of Malaysia and China as "Malaysia-China Year of Friendly Exchanges", to commemorate

the 40th anniversary of our diplomatic relations. With this, as you all know, Prime Minister Dato' Sri Mohd Najib Razak will be making an official visit to China very very soon. We expect more intensified higher exchanges to take place thereafter.

11. Indeed, the current snapshot of Malaysia-China relations is one that is closely connected, multi-faceted and multi-thronged. The tradition of mutual trust in pursuit of opportunities and prosperity continues to be the hallmark of the relationship, one that both can mutually benefit from. It has also contributed to the harmony and stability in the region and the furtherance of its vibrant and dynamic socio-economic development.

12. Before concluding my speech, I would like to put on record Malaysia's utmost gratitude to the Chinese Government for ensuring the arrival of the two giant pandas in Malaysia on 21 May 2014 (yesterday). The two giant pandas, named Fu Wa and Feng Yi which arrived yesterday are living testament and symbol of the long standing Sino-Malaysia friendship.

13. In conclusion, as we celebrate this historic occasion, let us work together to ensure that Malaysia and China will continue as partners for peace and prosperity as envisioned by the wisdom of our leaders. I am confident that our relations are poised to enter into a new era of cooperative and mutually beneficial endeavours that would make our next forty years more memorable, God willing.

Thank you.