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Castro, Dr Mahathir 'architects' in building strong Cuba-Malaysia ties, says Cuban Ambassador

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Former Cuban President Fidel Castro and Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad were the 'architects' in building the strong diplomatic ties which enabled both countries to respect each other and cooperate despite differences in their political systems, says Cuban Ambassador to Malaysia Ibeté Fernández Hernández.

Speaking at a reception to mark the 61st anniversary of the Cuban Revolution and the 45th year of diplomatic relations between Havana and Kuala Lumpur here recently, the envoy said the exchanges of delegations and agreements signed during both leaders' various visits brought the relationship to a superior stage and "it is our wish that it continues strengthening in the future on the basis of respect and mutual confidence".

"With their wisdom and long view, they (Castro and Dr Mahathir) made possible for two countries with different political systems to respect each other and cooperate peacefully without differences being an obstacle," she said in her speech at the reception held at a hotel here last Thursday.

Hernández said links in many areas – such as commerce, science, biotechnology, sports, education, medicine and culture – have developed in the 45 years of bilateral relations between Havana and Kuala Lumpur.

"Malaysia and Cuba has shown having a high level of coordination and mutual support in the international fora, not only for multilateral but also for bilateral and global issues affecting the

world," she said.

Deputy Minister of Water, Land and Natural Resources Tengku Zulpuri Shah Raja Puji was the guest of honour for the event.

Cuba and Malaysia established diplomatic ties on Feb 6, 1975 – at the time of the Cold War ideological divide – and since then have moved forward to enjoy meaningful relations and cooperation in many areas – politics, economics, medical, education, biotechnology, sports and people-to-people relations.

The Caribbean island nation opened its embassy in Kuala Lumpur in 1997, and Malaysia followed suit by setting up its embassy in Havana in February 2001.

Hernandez said Cubans and Malaysians have learned to look at each other in a positive and friendly way where "person-to-person relationship have created a great impact to raise awareness about their respective countries despite the physical distance that separates both nations".

"I take this opportunity to renew our commitment to consolidate the ties that bind us to Malaysia, and reaffirm, with pride and enthusiasm ... the effort that guides the Cuban people to build an increasingly socialist, democratic, prosperous and sustainable society.

"There is no doubt that as long as there is a worthy man in my country, Cuba will exist," she said.

The ambassador said the year 2020 marks the 61st anniversary of the Cuban Revolution and that it has never ceased to be threatened by the most powerful superpower ever since the early days of the Revolution.

Hernandez also said the year 2019 has been one of the worst for the country where the "resurgence of the blockade at its best, the aggressiveness of the measures taken by the United States government trying to provoke a change of government, even ignoring the will of the Cuban people – has no comparison in history".

"The blockade didn't stop Cuba and it won't stop Cuba, we will continue forward, avoiding obstacles, changing what has to be changed to continue enjoying the privilege of having the dignified society that Cubans of many generations won standing up, fighting for their emancipation rights," she said.

On another development, the ambassador said Cuba has moved forward in the links with all the countries which were present at the reception because "respect has guided relations over differences".

"Cuba is ready to share. We do not give what we have left, but we share what we have. If abiding by principles and expressing solidarity is a sin, Cuba and Cubans will continue sinning. Its altruism has won Cuba a place in history that nobody can deny," Hernandez said.

Commenting on the COVID-19 outbreak, Hernandez said that one of the antivirals used to fight the deadly virus is produced by Cuba and that she hoped China will defeat the challenge imposed by the disease.

Also at the function were a few Malaysian doctors whose medical studies were fully sponsored

by the Cuban government.

Dr B. Sasitharan, 29, who hails from Johor and obtained his medical degree at Latin American School of Medicine in Havana, expressed his sincere gratitude towards the Cuban government for fully funding his studies which he regards as a testament to the strong bond of relationship between Malaysia-Cuba.

"I feel very thankful to the Cuban government for this...it signals how strong the relationship is," said Sasitharan to Bernama, who spent seven years studying for a medical degree.

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