

Australia Day remarks

Kepada hos kami, benarkan saya untuk mengucapkan bahawa ia merupakan satu penghormatan bagi saya untuk bertugas sebagai Pesuruhjaya Tinggi Australia di negara yang indah ini.

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to this reception to mark Australia Day 2015.

Australia Day every year is an occasion for Australians at home and abroad to celebrate our vibrant multicultural country, and our success as a nation.

This year, here in Malaysia, we have additional cause for celebration, with 2015 marking the 60th anniversary of Australia's diplomatic presence in Malaysia.

Our first Commission was established here in Kuala Lumpur in 1955, predating Malayan independence by two years. Even then, sixty years ago, Australia saw this as a place that mattered.

Our shared history stretches even further back to the Second World War, when Australian armed forces served in defence of Malaya. We stood shoulder to shoulder with you again during the Emergency and Confrontation.

Back then, our common links were empire, geography and a commitment to democratic freedoms.

Today, we are partners in a dynamic, multi-faceted relationship founded on common interests, mutual respect and many shared values. We are partners with a shared stake in the security and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region.

Australians and Malaysians are connected now more than ever before. Last year half a million Australians visited Malaysia, and three hundred thousand Malaysians visited Australia. Two-way trade has doubled in the past decade, and we rank among each other's top ten trading partners. There is significant investment in both directions, and a strong sense of optimism in our business communities.

Education has long been a connecting thread. 300,000 Malaysians are graduates of Australian universities. 21,000 young Malaysians were enrolled at Australian universities and schools last year, and a similar number in Australian campuses and degree courses here in Malaysia. This year, we'll welcome 150 Australian undergraduates to Malaysia to study under our New Colombo Plan.

Our defence and security cooperation was forged in war and peace. Our armed forces train and exercise together. And as new challenges emerge, we work together, often quietly, always purposefully, to address them. We've seen this in our cooperation to tackle terrorism and the emerging threat of foreign fighters and radicalised individuals. And we've seen it in our collaboration in the search for MH370 and in response to the downing of MH17.

This anniversary year, we look ahead to what more we can do together. We do so with confidence that the bonds of friendship will strengthen further and we will achieve even greater success in the future.

To our many Malaysian friends in government, business, academia, the media, the arts and elsewhere who work with us, thank you. To the many companies and organisations who are our partners, thank you.

Let me acknowledge in particular the Malaysia Australia Business Council, the Malaysian Australian Alumni Council and the Malaysia Australia New Zealand Association for the contributions they make to business, education and community ties.

Finally, a big thank you to our sponsors, whose generous support makes this event possible.

I wish you a *selamat hari kebangsaan* Australia and invite you to enjoy the fine Australian food and festivities.

Terima kasih.