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Najib's trips attract investors

By Rozanna Latiff
news@nst.com.my

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak is optimistic of a better future and more jobs for Malaysians following his busy month renewing ties with investor countries.

Recounting the highlights of his working visits to Europe, North America and Asia last month, Najib said the trips, which began with an audience with Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah, had yielded encouraging response and outcomes, including a potential RM21.8 billion investments from American and Japanese investors.

On his first official visit to Qatar, he urged Malaysian businesses to take advantage of investment opportunities in the Middle East nation as it prepared to host the Fifa World Cup in 2022.

"Infrastructure projects worth

US\$140 billion (RM420 billion) have been launched, paving the way for Malaysian companies to increase our economic presence there," Najib wrote on his blog, www.lmalaysia.com.my, yesterday.

Najib said he had also met Malaysian business owners and Qatari investors, during which investment opportunities for both nations in infrastructure, oil and gas, and tourism were highlighted.

Najib also met his Qatari counterpart, Prime Minister Sheikh Hamad Jassim Jabar al-Thani.

"As it was my first official visit there since taking over the government, it was crucial that my visit reinforced Malaysia's relationship with the Gulf nation."

He recounted his experiences in England, a trip he made on an invitation by the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, where he delivered a lecture on moderation in religion and Islam to about 600 people.

"I reiterated my stand and urged the audience to recognise that the real divide is neither between the East and West nor between people of different faiths, but between extremists and moderates."

Najib toured the site of the centre's construction, funded by Malaysia and other Islamic countries.

"Hopefully, this remarkable building and the institution it houses will be a beacon of tolerance and understanding between Islam and the West."

He said the two-day visit had been followed by an extended stay in the United States, where he focused on attracting investors.

"I am optimistic that foreign direct investment will continue to pour in, as several multinationals stated their intention to invest up to US\$6 billion (RM18 billion), which means more jobs for Malaysians."

In New York, he launched Invest Malaysia 2011 to an audience of

more than 360 potential investors at the New York Stock Exchange, and chaired the inaugural Global Science and Innovation Advisory Council meeting at the New York Academy of Sciences.

At the meeting, Najib spoke about the Digital Malaysia Masterplan, a centralised approach to capitalise on opportunities from increasing digitalisation worldwide.

"Hopefully, this council, whose members comprise prominent scientists and experts in various fields, will help Malaysia seek innovative technological solutions to carry ourselves forward and out of the middle-income trap."

He also highlighted his trip to Washington D.C. and Baltimore, Maryland, where he announced the establishment of the Johns Hopkins University medical programme in Malaysia, to be conducted in collaboration with Perdana University in September.

"This way, world-class education is now available, as they say, in our own backyard."

Najib said the United States visit, which had to be cut short after the Hulu Langat landslide tragedy on May 22, had also been meaningful on a personal level as he attended his daughter's graduation at Georgetown University.

Two days after visiting the site of the tragedy, Najib said he headed for Japan for a brief working visit at the 17th International Nikkei Conference in Tokyo, where he received confirmation that Japanese firms would invest RM3.8 billion in Malaysia.

"(This is) a positive sign for both countries, as Japan has been more inclined to direct its funds to rebuild the nation following the earthquake and tsunami last March."

He said he had met Foreign Minister Takeaki Matsumoto and industry leaders from the Japan-Malaysia Economic Association.