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Najib to get feel of bullet train during visit to Japan



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TOKYO: Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is expected to reaffirm his nation's keen interest in the Malaysia-Singapore High Speed Rail (HSR) project when he holds bilateral talks with his Malaysian counterpart Datuk Seri Najib Razak tomorrow.

Najib will arrive in Tokyo today for a three-day visit accompanied by Transport Minister Datuk Seri Liew Tiong Lai, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Idris Jala and Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Dr Ali Hamsa.

He will be briefed by Japan Railway (JR) president Tetsuro Tomita on the Shinkansen network of high-speed railway lines in Japan, as well as development around the station here.

Najib will also take a 320km ride on the high-speed train to Sendai after the briefing.

Malaysian ambassador to Japan Datuk Ahmad Izlan Idris said the HSR project was expected to be among the key points during the bilateral talks.

"We expect him to again raise the issue of Japan's strong interest in the project."

Other than China, Japan has been aggressively lobbying for the project through JR, banking on its reputation as the first nation to introduce dedicated railway lines for high-speed travel. The proposed Malaysia-Singapore HSR link will cut travel time between Kuala Lumpur and Singapore to just 90 minutes.

Earlier this month, both governments decided to push back the initial deadline of 2020 for the completion of the project.

Malaysia and Singapore hope to reach an agreement by the end of the year on the new timeline.

Ahmad Izlan said Japan and Malaysia, which have experienced "extremely good" bilateral relations, would focus on enhancing trade, investment, education and technology during Najib's visit.

Japan is Malaysia's third largest trading partner after China and Singapore, with RM137.45 billion in vol-



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ume last year.

"There will also be focus on the second phase of Malaysia's Look East Policy," Ahmad Izlan told Malaysian journalists here yesterday.

He said Najib and Abe were also expected to discuss regional and international matters, such as Asean, which Malaysia is helming currently; the Asean Economic Community (AEC); South China Sea security and disputes; as well as Malaysia's role in the United Nations Security Council.

Najib's tight schedule kicks off with a reception and dinner with Malaysian students and community today.

Tomorrow, he will have a full day, kicking off with a courtesy call from

Nikkei Inc president and chief executive officer Tsuneo Kita.

Najib and his wife, Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, will also have an audience with Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko at the Takenoma Hall of the Imperial Palace.

After that, he will receive courtesy calls from Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida and corporate leaders of

giant Japanese corporations like East Japan Railway Company, Sumitomo Corporation and Mitsui & Co Ltd.

Najib, who is on his second official visit to Japan, will also attend a roundtable meeting with 31 captains of the industry to discuss Malaysia-Japan economic relations.

At 6pm, he will be accorded an official welcoming ceremony at the Japanese prime minister's office in Chiyoda-ku, where he and Abe will hold their bilateral meeting.

The day will end with a dinner hosted by Abe.

On Tuesday, Najib will be involved in a World Islamic Economic Forum (WIEF) roundtable, where he is expected to deliver a keynote address.

He will then depart for the Tokyo station where he will be briefed on the Shinkansen network before taking a ride on the high-speed train to Sendai. Najib will also attend a dialogue with Malaysian students at Tohoku University in Sendai.

Rosmah, who will visit the National Institute of Radiological Science here tomorrow, will visit key landmarks of the Great East Japan Earthquake in Sendai on Tuesday.

The prime minister will depart for Kuala Lumpur from the Sendai International Airport.

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