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PRIME NEWS

Najib, Xi to discuss bilateral ties

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Malaysian Ambassador to China **Datuk Zainuddin Yahya** at a press meet in Boao in Hainan, China, yesterday. Bernama pic

SIGNIFICANT: Chinese president to have a private dinner with PM, says envoy

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MALAYSIA'S close relationship with China will be further reaffirmed when Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak meets China President Xi Jinping on the eve of the opening of the Boao Forum for Asia 2015 (BFA) here.

The meeting is expected to see both leaders discuss bilateral ties

in the areas of trade, education, financial services, infrastructure development and defence between the two nations.

It will be followed by a private dinner hosted by Xi.

This is Najib's fourth meeting with Xi since he became prime minister in 2009 and his fifth visit to China since 2011.

Malaysian ambassador to China Datuk Zainuddin Yahya said the private dinner was a testament to Malaysia-China's strong relationship, which has grown stronger for the past few years.

"The invitation was personally made by Xi and this reflects the significance of the relationship between the two leaders despite Najib's brief working visit here for the forum.

"It also reflects the significance of the close ties between the two

nations, which has been upgraded from strategic cooperation to strategic comprehensive partnership," he said yesterday, ahead of Najib's arrival for the forum, which ends on Sunday.

Zainuddin said upon his arrival, Najib, accompanied by Malaysia's special envoy to China Tan Sri Ong Ka Ting, would be accorded a special 45-minute high-speed train ride from Haikou airport's Meilan Train Station to Boao.

He said the prime minister would also deliver a speech at the opening of BFA tomorrow before leaving for Kuala Lumpur in the afternoon.

Najib's address, Zainuddin said, was expected to be tailored to the forum's theme, while touching on the visions of Asean as an eco-

nomnic community.

Malaysia is the Asean chairman this year.

"Najib is also expected to hold meetings with Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte and Kazakhstan Prime Minister Karim Massimov on the sidelines of the forum on Saturday," he said.

This year's forum, themed "Asia's New Future: Toward a Community of Common Destiny", is the first for Najib and will be attended by 16 leaders and senior government officials from Asian, European and African countries.

The event, the 14th since its inception in 2002, is a platform to discuss economic cooperation within Asia and other parts of the world.