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# Malaysia, Sri Lanka mull free trade plan

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**FIRST VISIT:** Najib, Sirisena looking to boost trade, investments between countries

**AZURA ABAS**  
KUALA LUMPUR  
news@nst.com.my

**M**ALAYSIA and Sri Lanka have agreed to explore the possibility of initiating a free trade agreement.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak and Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena yesterday reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthen bilateral trade and investment cooperation, and to deepen their economic engagement for mutual benefit.

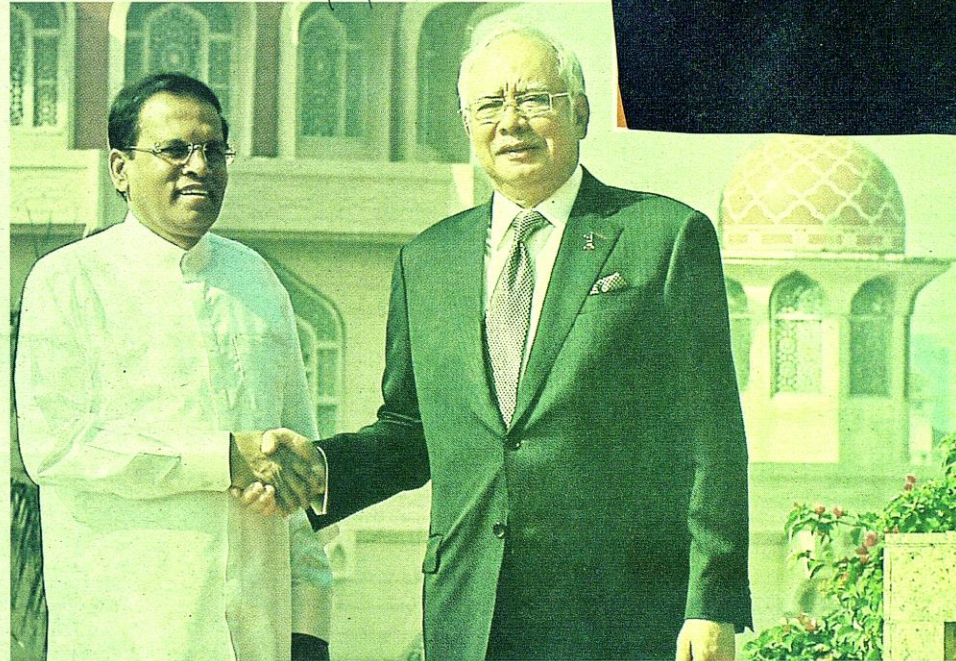
In a joint statement, Sirisena assured Malaysian investors would enjoy a conducive investment climate in Sri Lanka, and invited business players to proactively look at the attractive opportunities offered by his country. Both leaders welcomed the interest shown by Malaysian companies in taking up the business opportunities provided by Sri Lanka, the statement said.

Najib and Sirisena also made a call for all nations to reject terrorism.

They were unanimous in their stand against violent extremism and expressed strong condemnation of terror in all forms.

"Both sides agreed to continue sharing information and best practices with a view to address the challenges posed by terrorism and other traditional and non-traditional threats," they said.

Malaysia and Sri Lanka also recognised each other's responsibility in the promotion of peace, develop-



Prime Minister **Datuk Seri Najib Razak** hosting Sri Lankan President **Maithripala Sirisena** in Perdana Putra, Putrajaya, during the latter's three-day working visit to Malaysia yesterday. Pic by Mohd Fadli Hamzah

ment and security of the region and beyond, based on a convergence of political and socio-economic interests and aspirations.

The two leaders went on to underscore the need to adhere to the main objectives and principles of the United Nations' Charter and norms of international law based on trust, equality and cooperation, adding that international issues should be resolved through peaceful dialogue and diplomatic means.

Malaysia and Sri Lanka also reaffirmed their desire to promote greater opportunities for students to pursue higher education in each other's country.

Both leaders also acknowledged the increasing two-way tourist

movement and recalled the close cultural affinity between the two countries.

"The presence of a large Sri Lankan community in Malaysia is a positive factor in fostering and sustaining current and future linkages to imbue greater dynamism to friendly relations between Malaysia

and Sri Lanka," the statement said.

Earlier, the two leaders witnessed the signing of five memoranda of understanding on tourism; cooperation in youth development; recruitment, employment and repatriation of workers; culture, arts and heritage; and, agriculture scientific research and technical cooperation.

Sirisena is in Malaysia for a three-day working visit, his first since he took office in January last year.

He expressed appreciation for the warm reception and generous hospitality extended to him and his delegation. The Sri Lankan president also invited Najib to visit his country and he accepted the invitation.