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Jack Ma named Malaysia's digital economy adviser

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'SUPER SPEED':

e-Free Trade Zone to be launched next year in conjunction with Ma's visit, says PM

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ALIBABA Group executive chairman and Internet entrepreneur Jack Ma is now adviser to the Malaysian government on digital economy, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak announced yesterday.

"Jack Ma has accepted our invitation to be the adviser to the Malaysian government on digital economy. He will advise us and tell us how to put together the road, the path to the future," he said at the launch of the Alitrip Malaysia Tourism Pavilion.

Najib, who had a 30-minute meeting with Ma before the event, said the iconic businessman also agreed to attend Malaysia's Global Transformation Forum next year.

"To take advantage of his visit to Malaysia, we will also launch the e-Free Trade Zone in March. We will work with super speed to make this happen. We will make this happen," he added.

In his speech earlier, Ma said he had a "wonderful discussion" with Najib on what they could do together both in China and Malaysia.

"I am very excited about what we're going to do next year and in the years ahead.

"The Alitrip Malaysia Tourism Pavilion is an e-commerce platform with the potential to reach out to the China market and generate lucrative opportunities for the tourism industry of both countries.

"The virtual pavilion is expected to benefit from an extremely high-



Prime Minister **Datuk Seri Najib Razak** with Alibaba Group executive chairman **Jack Ma** during the launch of the **Alitrip Malaysia Tourism Pavilion** in Beijing yesterday. *Bernama pic*

traffic platform, giving Malaysia optimum exposure to a vast and thriving market with tremendous capacity for growth.

"Malaysia is a country where, on social media, people have an average of 235 friends, which means Malaysians value friendship, trust and inclusiveness. We are here today to build up that trust and friendship for the challenges we will face together," Ma said.

The former English teacher said he had visited Malaysia 10 years ago with his wife and family, and fell in love with the country.

"I love Malaysia a lot. You have

excellent food, excellent culture. Two thousand years ago, the Chinese went to Malaysia to survive. Now, 2,000 years later, we suggest that the Chinese go there to enjoy life," he added.

Ma said 120 million Chinese travelled overseas every year, and with the knowledge and technology offered by portals like Alitrip, he expected more Chinese to be able to travel.

Last year, Malaysia welcomed nearly 1.7 million tourists from China alone. For the first eight months of this year, there was a 26.3 per cent growth in Chinese tourist arrivals

compared with the same period last year, totalling 1.4 million tourists.

The target for 2016 is to achieve two million Chinese arrivals and eight million by 2020.

Ma also paid tribute to Tun Abdul Razak Hussein's decision 42 years ago to establish diplomatic relations with China, which has led to the current strong ties between both countries' leaders, businesses and people.

Page 1 pic: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak with Jack Ma during their meeting in Beijing yesterday.