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China promises deeper ties

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Sino-Malaysia relations moving forward

BEIJING: Chinese Premier Li Keqiang has pledged to enhance the close ties between China and Malaysia.

He said this when the media was given several minutes to take pictures during his bilateral talks with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak at the Great Hall of the People here yesterday.

Li said the fact that it was just two years since Najib's last official visit showed the importance Malaysia attached to Sino-Malaysia ties.

"While we were talking after the grand welcome ceremony for you just now, I recalled the warm hospitality your government extended to me when I visited Malaysia last year.

"I also recalled how your father (Tun Abdul Razak Hussein) contributed to China-Malaysia bilateral relations. We must now push ahead to further deepen our relations," Li, who was sitting opposite Najib, said in Mandarin.

Former prime minister Tun Abdul Razak was the first Asean



Historic meeting: Najib (right) introducing Li to Transport Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai and other Cabinet ministers during the welcoming ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

leader to establish bilateral relations with China in 1974 amid fears of communism then.

Since then, Malaysia-China bilateral trade had jumped to nearly US\$100bil (RM417bil) in 2015 from a mere US\$500mil (RM2bil) in 1975.

After the bilateral talks and the signing of 14 government-to-government memorandums of understanding (MoUs) witnessed by the two leaders, China's Vice-Minister

of Foreign Affairs Liu Zhenmin told reporters that the MoUs "will bring the relations to a new heights".

He said during the meeting, Malaysia reaffirmed its support for China's Belt and Road initiative.

"The future for economic cooperation in infrastructure, investment, trade, agriculture ... will be bright," he said, adding that there were agreements for China to get involved in the East Coast Rail Line (ECRL) project and an oil and gas

pipeline construction in Sabah.

He said one of the highlights of the bilateral talks was an agreement on naval defence.

"This naval cooperation will help to bring stability to the South China Sea. This cooperation shows there is a high level of trust between the two countries," he said.

Liu also revealed that both sides had agreed to settle maritime disputes over the South China Sea via dialogue.