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Najib backs strong ties with China

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Relationship benefits both peoples and creates stability, says PM

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak has stated his commitment to develop Malaysia's "strong and stable" relations with China, saying he intends to ensure that "it continuously improves and reaches new heights."

In an exclusive interview with Xinhua ahead of his official visit to China starting today, Najib said he regarded China "as a true friend and a strategic partner" and the relationship between Malaysia and China had "created benefits not just for the people of our two nations but also for regional stability and harmony."

"It is a relationship I am personally committed to; not just as the Prime Minister of Malaysia, but also as the son of Tun Razak - our former Prime Minister who first established diplomatic relations with China 42 years ago," he wrote in response to Xinhua.

Reiterating that the relationship between the two "has entered a special phase," Najib said he could not agree more with Chinese President Xi Jinping, who compared China's relations with Malaysia "as being as close as lips are to teeth" and Premier Li Keqiang, who recognised Malaysia as a "good neighbour, good partner and a good friend."

Recalling achievements in bilateral cooperation since 2013, when bilateral relations were upgraded to "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership", Najib listed a series of major infrastructure projects in railways, real estate and energy, the opening of a campus by China's Xiamen University in Malaysia and an increasing number of Chinese tourists arriving in Malaysia, which he hoped could reach two million by the end of the year.

He highlighted "military cooperation," saying it had "hit new heights in recent years."

Aside from the joint military



Cutting edge: Najib during an earlier visit at a tech exhibit after launching the 'Huawei Customer Solution Integration and Innovation Experience Centre'. The Prime Minister said the tech giant's expanding presence in Malaysia symbolised confidence in the nation's economy. — Bernama

training exercises in 2015 between Chinese and Malaysian armed forces, Najib revealed that the two countries would be finalising "the first significant defence deal" during his trip.

He also noted that "a number of new agreements and understandings in various fields ranging from economy and defence to education and innovation" will be signed during the visit.

Najib, who is about to embark on

his third official visit to China since he assumed office in 2009, played down the impact of a sluggish global economy, saying trade relations between the two countries, having reached over US\$100bil (RM420.15bil) in 2013, will continue to grow.

Aside from numerous opportunities to do business with China, Najib noted that Malaysia "welcomed significant investment from China" in innovation

and technology.

He said Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei's expanding presence in Malaysia symbolised the confidence that leading Chinese companies had in the Malaysian economy.

Najib commended the China-proposed Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, saying he believed the bank could join the ranks of the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank as a pow-



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erful platform to assist developing countries achieve greater growth and development."

Najib also welcomed the Belt and Road Initiative, saying there are "clear synergies" between the initiative and Malaysia's national transformation plan, which he put forward at the 2017 Budget speech earlier this month.

On issues of security challenges faced by Malaysia and China, Najib said both countries agreed to further strengthen cooperation in the areas of law enforcement, security and defence, including friendly visits and consultations in between respective law enforcement, security and defence agencies.

Najib said he was also committed to increase cooperation between the two sides in joint exercises and personnel training.

He noted that the "community of common destiny" idea, proposed by Xi, reflected China's intention to ensure a peaceful neighbouring environment, which was crucial for the region's continued growth and stability.

During the trip, Najib will meet Xi, Li and top legislator Zhang Dejiang, according to China's Foreign Ministry. — Xinhua