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# PM: Germany a strategic partner

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## BRIGHT PROSPECTS:

Deeper ties in store, says Najib after talks with Merkel



Reporting from Berlin

**H**AILING Germany as a strategic partner for Malaysia, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak yesterday signalled deeper and more meaningful economic ties with Europe's most powerful economy.

German Chancellor Dr Angela Merkel gave Najib a red-carpet welcome with full military honours, and said the first official visit by a Malaysian leader in 11 years would contribute to closer relations.

"Malaysia's development since independence has been a success story, both economically and socially speaking," she told a joint press conference after an hour-long discussion over lunch at her office at the chancellery here.

Sharp at noon, and amid the warm and sunny weather, Merkel greeted Najib on the red carpet outside the chancellery courtyard with a formal handshake. A military band played *Negaraku* and the German national anthem in front of Malaysian, Ger-

man and European Union flags.

The leaders then proceeded to inspect a guard of honour, comprising 120 troops from the German army, naval and air forces. They later proceeded to the eighth floor of the chancellery for bilateral talks during a working lunch, before attending the joint press conference.

Each side was joined by seven other people at the lunch. Those from Malaysia included International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed and Plantation Industries and Commodities Minister Datuk Seri Mah Siew Keong.

Najib used his rare visit to Germany to assuage concerns of the German government and industry over the environmental impact of Malaysia's oil palm cultivation.

Merkel earlier raised the issue of the sustainability of oil palm plantations during bilateral talks at the chancellery.

## 'Malaysia will cooperate'

**BERLIN:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said Malaysia will cooperate with United States and international authorities investigating the alleged misappropriation of funds from a state-owned fund that he founded.

"We are equally concerned about good governance in Malaysia and

the rule of law," he said after a meeting with German Chancellor Dr Angela Merkel when asked about the investigations.

"So, within the bounds of good governance and the rule of law, Malaysia will do its best to cooperate and do whatever is necessary." **Reuters**

At the joint press conference, Najib said he welcomed the visit of German lawmakers to Malaysia to see for themselves how Malaysia managed the oil palm industry.

"There is no such thing as 'slash and burn'. Our oil palm industry has been developed in a sustainable manner. We need to develop it in a responsible and sustainable manner, and this is exactly what Malaysia is doing."

Both leaders also discussed the Syrian crisis, refugee issue, global terrorism, South China Sea issue, and issues of rule of law and good governance in Malaysia.

Najib praised Merkel over her humanitarian refugee policy.

Merkel has defended her decision

to open up Germany to refugees, resulting in the inflow of 1.1 million last year alone. She recently said the refusal of some EU countries to accept Muslim refugees was "unacceptable".

Asked about the matter yesterday, she said the same policy should apply to each EU member state.

"This is my opinion, has always been my opinion and will continue to be my opinion."

To this, Najib said he admired her position, adding that it was strong and "morally ethical".

He said the issue of Syrian and other refugees should be tackled at the source, and not burden other countries.

"Malaysia will play its part. We are

not a major power, but certainly within the context of OIC (Organisation of Islamic Cooperation)."

Merkel said she raised the issue of corruption, resumption of Malaysia-EU free trade talks, situation in Asean as a whole, Malaysia-China relations and common challenges, such as global security.

Before his meeting with Merkel, Najib had a closed-door dialogue session with German business leaders here, where he drummed up for more German investments in Malaysia.

Germany is the EU's biggest investor in Malaysia, with total approved investments of US\$11.4 billion (RM47.2 billion), which have created more than 63,500 jobs.

Najib then had a one-on-one meeting with the heads of two German companies. One of them was Rudi De Winter, chief executive officer of X-FAB, a German wafer-fab company. The prime minister was due meet-top BMW officials at a one-on-one meeting at his hotel later in the afternoon, before attending a dinner with the Malaysian community last night.

**Page 1 pic:** Prime Minister **Datuk Seri Najib Razak** and German Chancellor **Dr Angela Merkel** at the chancellery in **Berlin** yesterday.