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# Paving the way to mega trade growth

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## Digital zone to also see creation of a new Kuala Lumpur Internet City in Bandar Malaysia

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Datuk Seri Najib Razak and Alibaba Group's founder Jack Ma have launched the much-anticipated Digital Free Trade Zone (DFTZ), expected to generate trade worth US\$65bil (RM286bil) by 2025.

The DTFZ, mooted by the Prime Minister under Budget 2017, aims to create 60,000 jobs by then and double the export growth of small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs).

Speaking to a packed audience of leading businessmen and Alibaba senior executives yesterday, Najib identified the digital economy as the only sector that could provide immediate growth for Malaysia.

He said by pushing the DFTZ – the first outside China and only second in the world – Malaysia could bring SMEs, micro businesses, warehousing facilities and logistics and the likes in one place, and increase trade with Asean and the world.

The DFTZ will also see the creation of a new Kuala Lumpur Internet City (KLIC) in Bandar Malaysia, with Catcha Group made its master developer.

The KLIC aims to house at least 1,000 Internet-linked firms and 25,000 tech professionals, by taking up 5 million sq ft built over 15 years with an estimated gross develop-



**VVIP guests:** Najib and his wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor at the Nobu Restaurant with (seated from left) Pemandu president and CEO Datuk Seri Idris Jala, Olympian gold medallist Usain Bolt and Virgin group founder Sir Richard Branson. (Standing from left are) former F1 driver David Coulthard, motivational speaker Chris Gardner (of the Pursuit of Happyness fame), paralympian Katrina Webb and mountaineer Chris Bonington.

ment value (GDV) of RM5bil.

Najib said he was glad to learn that with the setting up of DFTZ, SMEs and micro businesses – which now account for 37% of the economy – could raise their GDP contribution to between 60 and 80%.

“This is our commitment to you,” he said, turning to Ma.

“When we shook hands in November, I meant business.”

Najib met Ma in Beijing last November during his official visit to China. Ma agreed to be adviser to Malaysia on the DFTZ and had told Malaysia to “act fast”.

Ma confessed yesterday that he thought that Malaysia could not

launch the DFTZ on time. “But Malaysia is more efficient than I thought,” he quipped.

Najib said he and Ma, who created 35 million jobs in China, had a lot in common, such as wanting results, financial inclusivity, and improving efficiency.

Najib said he would visit Ma's

hometown of Hangzhou before attending the Belt and Road Summit on May 14.

In a separate event yesterday, the Prime Minister said Malaysia was looking forward to the next transformation towards 2050.

“The Government has recently set a new goal under the 2050 National Transformation Plan, which is for Malaysia to be a top 20 country by the year 2050.

“PricewaterhouseCoopers predicts Malaysia will have the 25th highest GDP in the world, measured by purchasing power parity, by 2030 – and the 24th by 2050.

“So, top 20 is within our grasp,” he said in his opening remarks at the Global Transformation Forum (GTF) 2017.

Najib said the country's current National Transformation Programme (NTP) had created 1.8 million jobs between 2010 and 2016, over half of which were high-income jobs.

Najib and Ma also witnessed the exchange of memorandum of understanding documents between Malaysian firms and Alibaba's subsidiaries.

Later, Najib attended a dinner at Nobu Restaurant with the speakers from the forum.



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