

Newspaper	NEW STRAITS TIMES
Date	14 MAY 2017

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MALAYSIA-CHINA TALKS

PM MEETS TOP LEADERS

NST- 14/5/2017

Malaysia among first countries to support OBOR initiative, says Najib

BEIJING

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, here to join 27 other world leaders for the two-day Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation (BRF), met China's top leaders yesterday.

He had meetings with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang at the Great Hall of the People ahead of the forum, to be opened today.

Najib, at a press conference, said Xi thanked Malaysia for supporting its One Belt, One Road (OBOR), or Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and described bilateral ties with Malaysia as being at the highest level ever in history.

"We were among the first countries to support the initiative."

He said since his official visit to China in November last year, all the decisions undertaken had been acted upon positively.

"Among them is the East Coast Rail Link (ECRL), which is progressing smoothly," he said,



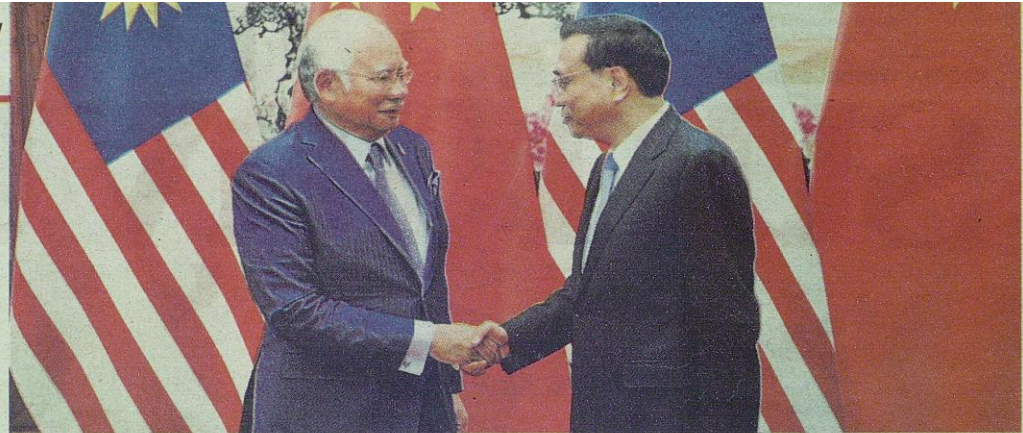
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adding that physical work would commence in July.

He said the Chinese government expressed interest in bidding for the 350km high-speed rail (HSR) project linking Kuala Lumpur to Singapore.

Other discussions centred on issues of mutual interest, such as the China-Malaysia Qin Zhou Industrial Park, Melaka Gateway and Industrial Park projects, Xiamen University Malaysia Campus and tourism.

Najib was accompanied by Second International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Ong Ka Chuan, Agriculture and Agribased Industry Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Shabery Cheek, Ministers in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Ahmad Rahman Dahlan and Datuk Seri Dr Wee Ka Siong, Transport Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai, and the Prime Minister's Special En-



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak with his Chinese counterpart, Li Keqiang, in Beijing yesterday. BERNAMA PIC

voy to China Tan Sri Ong Ka Ting. Several memoranda of understanding (MoUs) at government-to-government level were signed during the meeting.

China has been Malaysia's largest trading partner since 2009. According to official trade figures, bilateral trade last year amounted to RM240.91 billion, a 4.4 per cent increase from the previous year.

From January to April, total trade grew 20.3 per cent year-on-year to US\$29.33 billion, in Malaysia's favour.

Total imports are valued at US\$12.9 billion, a 25 per cent increase, and total exports US\$16.43 billion, an increase of 16.9 per cent, compared with the corresponding period last year.

Today, Najib will attend the BRF, the highest-level dialogue since the vision for OBOR was shared by Xi in 2013.

The initiative aims to redefine the global economy by integrating the economies of Europe, Asia and Africa through an unprecedentedly powerful network of transport and communications infrastructure. OBOR is China's long-term vision for greater connectivity and cooperation among Asian economies.

Meanwhile, Ka Chuan said a national secretariat on BRI would be established in the International Trade and Industry Ministry to coordinate and monitor the implementation of BRI projects in Malaysia.

"Under the MoU on BRI signed today, China commits in the next five years to import goods worth US\$2 trillion, invest up to US\$150 billion, and offer 10,000 places for study and training programmes in China

for all signatories."

Shabery said the safety and phytosanitary requirement protocol signed by his ministry would enable fresh pineapples to penetrate the Chinese market and boost export volume two-fold to RM320 million by 2020.

He said this would also pave the way for the export of other fresh fruits, such as durian, to China in future.