

Newspaper	NEW STRAITS TIMES
Date	10/09/2017

24.3PC INCREASE

NAJIB: GOOD TIES BOOST TRADE

Trade reached record RM430.5b in first quarter of 2017, says PM

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MALAYSIA'S encouraging trade performance in the first quarter of the year was not instantaneous, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

He said the achievement was a result of hard work and the government's good relations with other countries.

In his blog, najibrazak.com, yesterday, Najib said the country had created history when it recorded 24.3 per cent increase in the trade sector, an increase to RM430.5 billion compared with the same period last year.

"In March alone, the country's export has reached RM82.63 billion, the highest monthly fig-

ure for Malaysian exports ever achieved."

Citing good relationship with China, Najib said Malaysia enjoyed many benefits from it.

"Now, our country is allowed to export raw bird's nests to China following my visit last year. It has benefited around 10,000 farmers who are involved in this industry, thus providing them with additional income.

"At my request, China has also increased its palm oil purchase and we have recorded a 53.6 per cent increase over the last six months of last year.

"The government also has opened the doors for Malaysian companies to cooperate with companies from China through various memorandum of understanding (MoU), with values of more than RM175 billion, signed during my visit last year and this year.

"Likewise, our relationship with India; today many Malaysian companies are actively bidding for development projects in the country, particularly after six MoUs signed between the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) and in-

dustry players there.

"We have also successfully inked MoUs worth over RM158 billion during my visit last April."

He said Malaysia was well accepted by other countries, such as Japan, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and Germany.

"Our cooperation with these countries has proven to be beneficial to the nation."

He said a deal with Arameo had brought in a total investment of RM31 billion.

"The establishment of Malaysia-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement has further strengthened trade and investment ties between the two countries.

"We have become Japan's fourth largest trading partner with bilateral trade of RM120 billion last year."

Najib said he hoped that his working visit to the United States would go smoothly and open up more cooperation between the two countries.

He said Malaysia's position in Asean had also benefited the country.

"Through the Asean Economic

Community, Malaysians now have access to a US\$2.55 trillion (RM10.71 trillion) economy, with a population of more than 622 million people.

"Furthermore, we have the opportunity to make strategic cooperation with partners who have common interest with us.

"For example, we have agreed with Indonesia to enhance cooperation in the palm oil sector, particularly when we both are facing anti-palm oil campaigns, which give negative sentiments to palm-producing countries, launched by the European Union."

He said what had been listed were only part of the benefits that the country had been enjoying because of good relations with other countries.

"We have to remember that foreign investment helps us grow our economy despite the uncertainty of the global economy.

"We cannot be ignorant and refuse to work with other countries, tricked by sayings that the inflow of foreign investment is selling the country's sovereignty.

"We should not deny the benefits (the good ties) bring to

the people."

Najib said the opposition leaders were aware of the importance of foreign investment for economic prosperity.

"That is the reason why they are always abroad."

Najib said there were previous leaders who often used the rhetoric "selling the country (*jual negara*)", but in reality, many loans were made during their time.

He said the country received development loans of Y61.5 billion from Japan to build Kuala Lumpur International Airport in 1994.

"Does that mean that we have sold the nation's sovereignty? Not at all!

"Therefore, I hope the public will not be influenced by dirty political tactics aimed to scare the rakyat. Such tactics will only hurt us.

"*InshaAllah* (God willing) I will continue to build diplomatic relations and economic cooperation with other countries, and be even more committed in bringing the hopes and interests of Malaysians to the eyes of the world."

NST- 10/9/2017 P5-8