

DR M MEETS CHINA'S TOP LEADERS

3 major Molls signed in meeting between PM and China's Premier Li



**SOFEA
CHOK
SUAT
LING**

BEIJING

PRIME Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, here in the Middle Kingdom after successfully rebooting the East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) deal many believe was part of China's debt-trap diplomacy, met its top leaders yesterday.

In Beijing for the two-day Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation (BRF), Dr Mahathir held discussions with Chinese President Xi Jinping, Premier Li Keqiang and National People's Congress chairman Li Zhanshu ahead of the forum.

For China to accommodate and arrange for all three — the president, prime minister and

Congress chairman — to have bilaterals with Dr Mahathir was an honour, said officials.

In his bilateral meeting with Xi at the Great Hall of the People, a state building located at the western edge of Tiananmen Square, Dr Mahathir told Xi he was here to learn more about China's initiatives as Malaysia was one of the countries the Belt and Road passage would pass.

"I believe the initiatives will have an impact on Malaysia."

He alluded to the importance of technological development and how this could bridge communications between the East and West.

In his meeting with Li at the Diaoyutai State Guest House earlier, Dr Mahathir witnessed the signing of three significant agreements.

They are on enhancing palm oil trade and cooperation, collaboration in the development of industrial parks, infrastructure, logistics hub and transit-oriented developments pursuant to the ECRL project, and on the reinstatement of Bandar Malaysia.

The first memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed by the Malaysian Palm Oil Council and the China Chamber of Commerce of Import and Export of Foodstuff, Native Products and Animal By-products.

Under the MoU, China will buy an additional 1.9 million tonnes of palm oil from Malaysia at an estimated cost of RM4.56 billion over the next five years and invest at least RM2 billion in a biojet

fuel plant.

China and Malaysia also agreed, in the MoU, to work together to encourage the use of the yuan for palm oil trade, pending approval from Malaysia's central bank.

China is Malaysia's third-largest palm oil buyer, importing 1.9 million tonnes last year.

Malaysia has been trying to reduce its palm oil stockpiles, which hit their highest level in at least 19 years last December, in a bid to shore up prices.

The second MoU signed was between the Malaysian Investment Development Authority and China Communication Construction Company Ltd, while the third was between IWH CREC Sdn Bhd and the government of Malaysia on the reinstatement of the Bandar Malaysia framework agreement.

Dr Mahathir later attended a dinner in his honour hosted by Li Zhanshu at the Great Hall of the People.

Today, the prime minister will attend the much anticipated opening of the BRF.

The forum, themed "Belt and Road Cooperation: Shaping a Brighter Shared Future", is the highest-level dialogue since the vision for the BRF was first shared by Xi.

Representatives from more than 130 countries, including 37 leaders of foreign governments and thousands of representatives from all walks of life, have gathered here for the event.

All 10 Asean leaders are present at this year's forum.