

# Dr Mahathir's 2nd visit to China to strengthen trade relations

BEIJING • Efforts to foster closer trade relations between Malaysia and China will continue to be intensified during Prime Minister (PM) Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's five-day working visit to the country beginning today.

Dr Mahathir arrived at Beijing Capital International Airport here today for a five-day working visit to China and attend the second Belt and Road Forum (BRF) for international cooperation. He is expected to witness the signing of several memorandums of understanding (MoUs) between the two countries.

Malaysian Embassy in China charge d'affaires ad interim Nuryante Mohd Yazid said Dr Mahathir and his counterpart Li Keqiang will witness the inking of two MoUs after the two leaders meet this afternoon. The first agreement deals with efforts to enhance palm oil trading and cooperation between the Malaysian Palm Oil Board and the China Chamber of Commerce of import and export

of foodstuff, native products and animal by-products. Another MoU is aimed at enhancing cooperation in the development of industrial parks, infrastructure, logistics hub and transit-oriented development pursuant to the East Coast Rail Link project.

"The second MoU is between China Communication Construction Co Ltd and the Malaysian Investment Development Authority," Nuryante told a press conference at the embassy in Beijing yesterday.

China has remained Malaysia's largest trading partner for 10 consecutive years, with trade volume between both countries having increased by 8.1% to RM313.8 billion last year.

Dr Mahathir is in Beijing to attend the BRF on international cooperation yesterday and today at the invitation of the Chinese government. It is the PM's second visit to China after the May general election last year. Soon after being

appointed PM for the second time, Dr Mahathir visited China in August last year.

Seven Cabinet ministers and a menteri besar (MB) joined the PM's delegation this time around. They include Economic Affairs Minister Datuk Azmin Ali, Transport Minister Anthony Loke and Kedah MB Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir.

Nuryante said the PM is given the honour by China to deliver a speech at a forum which will be attended by 36 leaders and representatives from 140 countries.

After meeting Keqiang, Dr Mahathir is scheduled to call on Chinese President Xi Jinping. "Both leaders are expected to share views on the direction of Malaysia-China relations, including future strategies and cooperation," Nuryante said.

This evening, Dr Mahathir and wife, Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, will attend a dinner hosted by Li Zhan-shu, chairman of the National

People Congress.

Besides meeting China's top leaders and attending the forum, the PM will also take a closer look at the technological capabilities and sophistication of Chinese companies.

He is scheduled to visit China's multinational telecommunications company Huawei Technologies Co Ltd and provider of artificial intelligence technology Sensetime'.

Nuryante said the PM's visit would further open up and strengthen cooperation between companies of both countries in the field of high technology.

Dr Mahathir will also deliver a speech and hold a dialogue with Chinese business leaders at an event organised by the Malaysian Ministry of International Trade and Industry and global banking and financial services institution HSBC. The PM and his wife Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali return home on Sunday. — *Bernama*