

Dr M: BRI beneficial for all

Initiative gives participating nations equal standing, says PM



BEH YUEN HUI
in Beijing
newsdesk@thestar.com.my

TUN Dr Mahathir Mohamad says there is “equality” among all countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) despite their varied sizes and wealth.

The Prime Minister said that through the initiative by China to connect the world via the Silk Road and Maritime Silk Road, smaller and poorer nations had the chance to be on an equal footing with the well-off nations.

He described the BRI as being different from that promoted by other advanced countries in the past, in which small countries “did not have a say”.

“Countries with a population of just 400,000 can sit together with a superpower with 1.4 billion people, to discuss how all can benefit from infrastructure development such as building roads, railways and airports, and many others.

“Even the joint statement was drafted taking into consideration the views of all nations,” Dr Mahathir told Malaysian journalists before wrapping up his five-day visit to the Chinese capital yesterday.

The Prime Minister, who attended the high-level meeting of the Second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, said his concerns that the Straits of Malacca and South China Sea would be dominated by China were now cleared.



Advantageous move: Dr Mahathir speaking to reporters at the press conference in Beijing. Looking on is Foreign Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah.
— Bernama

Admitting that he once feared that the BRI was created for China to dominate the world, Dr Mahathir said he had changed his perception.

“This was an international gathering to discuss cooperation, policies and plans to develop our countries respectively,” he added.

“I understand more about the initiative now and believe it will benefit all participating countries.”

During the working visit, Dr Mahathir held bilateral talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping and

Premier Li Keqiang.

He also met with Chinese investors to get their views on how to improve the business environment in Malaysia, and visited Chinese telecommunication equipment giant Huawei.

He was also at an artificial intelligence technology company Sense-time to discuss how the technology could help Malaysia progress.

On the whereabouts of fugitive Malaysian businessman Jho Low, Dr Mahathir said he did not raise the matter with the Chinese side.

Low, who is wanted in connection with the 1MDB scandal, is said to be hiding in China.

Chinese ambassador to Malaysia Bai Tian had earlier said that Malaysia had asked for Beijing’s assistance to locate Low but that authorities were unable to locate him.

Watch the video
thestartv.com