

Role of BRI in growth hailed

Anwar highlights contributions made to rural facilities and creating jobs.

Xu Wei and Zhang Li report

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has highlighted the significance of the Belt and Road Initiative in enhancing Malaysia's growth, lauding the initiative for creating job opportunities and building infrastructure, especially in the rural heartland.

He told reporters in a recent group interview that the BRI, proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping 10 years ago, has harnessed collaboration between China and Malaysia and delivered wide-ranging benefits for both countries.

Malaysia is benefiting from the East Coast Rail Link, connecting shipping ports on the east and west coasts, he said.

The link, Malaysia's most high-end infrastructure project so far and involving building 40 tunnels from Kelantan to Selangor, is being undertaken by China Communications Construction Company. It is expected to greatly enhance connectivity and bring more balanced growth to Malaysia.

Anwar said he hopes the project will be completed within a year. "It is a great showcase of the relationship between China and Malaysia," he said.

In 2017 the two countries signed a memorandum of understanding for BRI collaboration, and trade between them was worth US\$203.6 billion last year, 15.3 per cent more than in 2021. China has been Malaysia's largest trading partner for the past 14 years.

Anwar highlighted the potential of Malaysia-China relations not only in terms of



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and guests at the launch in Kuala Lumpur on May 7 of the latest Proton car, a joint project between the Malaysian company and Chinese carmaker Geely.

ZHU WEI/XINHUA



Engineers on a construction site of the East Coast Rail Link project in Pahang state, undertaken by China Communications Construction Company. ZHU WEI /XINHUA

trade, economics and investment, which he said are pivotal to Kuala Lumpur, but also in terms of education, training, digital transformation and food technology.

"I think the relationship between Malaysia and China, which is extended to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, has a great future," he said.

He referred to two Chinese companies, Rongsheng Petrochemical and Zhejiang Geely Holding Group, which announced their investment commitments to Malaysia

as part of 19 memorandums of understanding that were signed between Malaysian and Chinese companies during his official four-day visit to China from March 29 to April 1.

Anwar's second trip to China this year was last month, when he was among the leaders who attended the 20th China-ASEAN Expo and the China-ASEAN Business and Investment Summit in Nanning, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region. The meetings he had with Chinese leaders were "cordial and beneficial",

covering a number of bilateral, regional and global issues, he said.

In talks with Chinese Premier Li Qiang in Nanning, Anwar pledged support to China in joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, and he expressed his readiness to enhance bilateral collaboration over infrastructure, the digital economy and green development.

China and Malaysia are both participants in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, which took effect in January last year. China has filed an application to join the CPTPP, a trade agreement of 12 countries including Malaysia. China and ASEAN members are also conducting negotiations over version 3.0 of the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area.

Anwar said Malaysia and the other ASEAN members welcome more free trade agreements with China. "The more arrangements and agreements we make with China or the regional party, the more benefits we can accrue from such collaboration."