

Najib's Visit to China Breaks New Ground
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BEIJING, Nov 1 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak's third official visit to China is not only historical from the business perspective as it consolidates bilateral ties, but also resulted in a landmark decision on defence.

The Prime Minister said in terms of successes on trade agreements, Malaysian and Chinese companies made historic achievements with the signing of 14 agreements worth RM144 billion.

In breaking new ground, the Malaysian government also made a landmark decision to buy four Littoral Mission Ships (LMS) from China, with two to be built in China and the other two in Malaysia, Najib told a press conference with the Malaysian media here Tuesday.

Najib, who is also Finance Minister, said the number of the ships would be increased if the Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN) is satisfied with the vessels, which would be completed in two years time.

Meanwhile, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein said this was the first time Malaysia purchased military equipment from China and the decision was made based on recommendations by RMN due to the cheaper price but fulfilling the criteria set.

He said excess from RMN's allocation on vessel repair would be used in the purchase of the ships to replace the existing Admiral-class Corvettes.

Meanwhile, Najib said in his meeting with his Chinese counterpart Li Keqiang late this afternoon, the discussion did not only concern giant corporations but also highlighted issues pertaining to small farmers and the swiftlet industry.

He also proposed to Li that the Chinese government increase the purchase of palm oil considering that 500,000 smallholders in the country depended on demand for the commodity.

Najib said Li had given a positive response and would take the necessary action. In the meantime, the issue of raw and unclean bird's nest exports to China was also raised, he said.

Najib said the government proposed to China that the facility to export raw and unclean bird's nests would be settled as soon as possible because it involved 10,000 swiftlet farmers in Malaysia.

Malaysia, which is the world's second largest producer of bird's nests, will be exporting raw and unclean bird's nest to China besides processed bird's nests. The bird's nest market in China stands at US\$1.8 billion per year.

Najib said he also informed Li that the Xiamen University Malaysia Campus in Sepang, Selangor - the first leading university from China to set up an overseas campus - would receive its first batch of 5,000 students in the first quarter of next year.

Najib said he also raised concerns on air connectivity hoping that the Chinese government could review the flight time for AirAsia and Malaysia Airlines to the republic, as the existing flights only depart after midnight or in the wee hours of the morning.

He said with a review, it is hoped will provide a better timing and comfort for the passengers.

The prime minister also informed Li that the Finance Ministry had granted a commercial bank licence to the China Construction Bank (Malaysia) Bhd (CCB Malaysia), a wholly-owned subsidiary of the China Construction Bank Corporation Ltd.

Najib said the Malaysian government also expressed support for the Genting Secret Garden, a world-class resort project, developed by Malaysia's Genting Group in Chongli County, Zhangjiakou, Hebei Province in China.

Najib said his meeting with Li had a positive outcome and regarded the latter as a trusted friend.

Asked on the total amount of investments and higher volume of trade allocated to China than other countries, Najib said the decision was made based on the economic reality.

He said in fact, half of the business opportunities given to China had also been offered to other countries but they did not have the financial capacity and expertise to execute the projects.

"We're also taking into account the advantages we obtain from the trade agreements," he said.

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