

**Najib's visit to boost Malaysia-China economic growth**  
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**The prime minister is also scheduled to meet Alibaba Group executive chairman Jack Ma in Hangzhou while in China.**

BEIJING: The visit of Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak to China beginning tomorrow, the seventh since 2009, reflects the close understanding between Malaysia and China in enhancing economic cooperation worth billions of ringgit to boost growth in the two countries.

The forthcoming visit is at the invitation of China's top leaders.

Najib will join the leaders of 27 nations and the United Nations secretary-general at the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation here from May 14 to 15.

Prior to his meetings with President Xi Jinping and his counterpart Li Keqiang here, Najib is scheduled to meet Alibaba Group executive chairman Jack Ma in Hangzhou, about 1,120 km southeast of the capital, Beijing.

Najib and his wife, Rosmah Mansor, are scheduled to arrive tomorrow morning in Hangzhou, where the headquarters of the Alibaba Group is located, to observe the operations of China's e-commerce giant. Ma is digital economy adviser to the Malaysian government.

In Hangzhou, Najib will witness the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation Sdn Bhd (MDEC) and Hangzhou municipal government as well as Alibaba Company Limited, Malaysia's Ambassador to China Zainuddin Yahya told Malaysian journalists here.

The MoU is expected to drive the Digital Free Trade Zone (DFTZ) project which Najib and Ma jointly launched in Kuala Lumpur on March 22.

This first digital free trade zone in the world will provide physical and virtual facilities for small and medium enterprises to conduct cross-border e-commerce activities.

The DFTZ is expected to operate as an e-commerce platform much like the Electronic World Trade Platform (e-WTP), a brainchild of Ma's. The zone will become a regional hub for SMEs with the aim of doubling e-commerce growth in Malaysia and raising the country's GDP to RM211 billion by 2020.

Najib and Rosmah are scheduled to leave for Beijing in the evening.

On Friday, Najib is scheduled to have a four-eyed meeting with Xi as well as bilateral talks with Prime Minister Li.

Zainuddin said several MoUs would be signed by the two governments, involving the international trade and industry ministry, transport ministry, and agriculture and agro-based industries ministry.

Several business (B2B) MoUs would also be signed, involving, among others, cooperation in investment, finance, real estate and agriculture.

China has been Malaysia's biggest trading partner for seven consecutive years, with bilateral trade reaching almost RM100 billion.

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