

## **Why Malaysia Supports China's Belt And Road**

KUALA LUMPUR, May 13 (Bernama) -- Following is the article written by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak on the 'China's One Belt One Road' initiative, published by the South China Morning Post on May 12.

Najib is on a five-day working visit to China from Friday:

### **WHY MALAYSIA SUPPORTS CHINA'S BELT AND ROAD**

By Najib Tun Razak

Three-and-a-half years ago, President Xi Jinping set out his vision of a new Silk Road, a 21st-century reimagining of the historical trading roads that linked East and West, bringing spices and precious goods, knowledge of culture and scholarships to lands far apart. It was a civilising process, and it was a time when the kingdoms and empires of Asia knew that both the treasures of the counting house and the treasures of the mind are best enriched through commerce and discussion, rather than through war, and enforced and unequal treaties.

I am proud to be among the many heads of government and state and other world leaders gathering in Beijing for the Silk Road's present-day successor -- President Xi's visionary "One Belt, One Road" initiative.

The Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation has an emphasis on mutual discussion, mutual construction and mutual sharing. This is greatly welcomed, and I am confident that the agreements many of the participants, including Malaysia, will be signing will set us on a strong footing for the next phase of this remarkable plan.

A phrase we often hear from China is "win-win cooperation", and there are those who are sceptical when they hear it. But we in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations can see the truth in it when we consider just some of the game-changing infrastructure projects resulting from the belt and road initiative: for example, the China-Laos railway; the Jakarta-Bandung high-speed railway; the Nakhon Ratchasima-Bangkok high-speed railway; and, for us in Malaysia, the East Coast Rail Link. The rail line will drive connectivity and economic growth for Malaysia's underdeveloped east coast, and act as a land-bridge enabling cost- and time-efficient transport of goods between Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

It may seem ridiculous to readers in China or other visitors at the forum, but there are some opposition politicians in my country who say we are selling our sovereignty by agreeing to such projects. But I make no apologies for wanting to build world-class infrastructure for Malaysia that will, with local ownership being preserved, open up huge swathes of our country, bringing more trade and opportunity to our people, thousands of new jobs, improved living standards and prosperity.

In the days of the old Silk Road, those who had wisdom knew that open minds, and borders open to trade, do not compromise sovereignty, but are in the interests of all countries. The same is true today, and we welcome investment from all our friends and partners, just as Malaysia, as a seafaring, outward-looking nation, proud of its diversity, moderation and tolerance, has always traded with and invested in countries around the world, including China.

It is only a few months since my last visit to China, and the warmth and friendliness with which I and my colleagues were received will not be forgotten. During that time, we signed agreements and understandings amounting to 144 billion ringgit (HK\$258 billion), which is a sign of the great confidence Chinese investors have in Malaysia. And with good reason. A recent report co-authored by the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania named Malaysia as the best country to invest in.

Although my visit was only a very short time ago, we have already seen results. In March, for instance, Jack Ma of Alibaba and I launched the world's first "Digital Free Trade Zone" in Kuala Lumpur. This will be a catalyst for e-commerce and small and medium-sized

enterprises, and will be the premier hub for global and local internet-based companies targeting Southeast Asia.

The littoral mission ships we agreed to buy from China, meanwhile, will provide jobs in both Malaysia and China -- as the first two ships are being built in each country -- as well as knowledge transfer to Malaysia, and help safeguard the safety and security of all Malaysians.

That is truly an example of win-win cooperation, and if it is on that basis that the belt and road initiative continues to develop, we should all welcome it. We should all contribute to and participate in it. And we should all wish it every success.

For, as Asia continues to rise and takes a greater place on the world stage, this model will ensure we do so as friends to all, helping those who have been left behind in our own countries and other parts of the world, and open to friends and partners from across the continents.

This is the "Asian Century", so let us ensure that it is marked not by the strife, wars and enmity of past centuries. Let us instead be true to our values of mutual respect, peace, harmony and non-interference in the affairs of sovereign states. Let us forge ahead with the building of new trade routes that diminishes none, but serves to increase the prosperity of all humanity.

I am sure that the forum, as part of President Xi's Belt and Road Initiative, will prove to be an important step in that direction.

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