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# CHINA PREMIER'S VISIT BRINGS OPPORTUNITIES

Analysts call on govt to strengthen ties and explore avenues for collaboration in technology

KUALA LUMPUR

**T**HE visit of China Premier Li Qiang to Malaysia tomorrow presents a significant opportunity to further strengthen ties developed between the two countries over the past 50 years and explore new avenues for collaboration.

Pacific Research Centre of

Malaysia principal adviser Dr Oh Ei Sun highlighted the substantial growth of Malaysia-China relations, which have evolved from diplomatic ties to extensive economic interactions in trade and investment.

"China is Malaysia's largest trading partner and Malaysia has consistently been China's largest trading partner in Southeast Asia.

"This strong foundation provides a solid basis for even closer cooperation," he said.

Li, who assumed office as China's premier in March last year, is scheduled to visit Malaysia from tomorrow to Thursday.

Oh, a senior fellow at the Singapore Institute of International Affairs, further said Li's visit of-

fered potential for enhanced collaboration, particularly within the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) framework, to facilitate joint projects that benefit both nations.

"For instance, the high-speed rail (HSR) connecting Malaysia and Singapore requires investment and technology for construction, which could benefit both countries. If the railway were linked to China, trade facilitation would be enhanced," he said.

In technology, he highlighted Malaysia's interest in leveraging China's assistance to advance its AI capabilities, acknowledging the country's expertise in this field.

He also proposed that more Chinese universities establish



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branch campuses in Malaysia.

Professor Dr Zaid Ahmad, from the Human Ecology Faculty of Universiti Putra Malaysia, noted that Li's meeting with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim could serve as a platform to reinforce mutual commitment to diplomatic principles that prioritised respect, particularly respecting Malaysia's sovereignty as a nation.

Zaid agreed with Oh that these visits presented opportunities to bolster cooperation in digital technology development such as AI from which Malaysia can benefit.

"This visit not only strengthens bilateral relations in the educa-

tion and digital technology sectors, but also enhances Malaysia's ability to develop and implement AI technology domestically," he said.

Geostrategist and senior fellow at the Nusantara Academy of Strategic Research Professor Dr Azmi Hassan said Li's visit underscored the premier's dedication to solidifying the 50-year Malaysia-China diplomatic relations at leadership and governmental levels.

He said Malaysia should use this familiarity to boost cooperation with China, especially through BRI and conclude negotiations for the Asean-China Free Trade Area 3.0. **Bernama**