

Relationship with China is crucial, says expert

By THO XIN YI **Sunday Star 6/11/16 pg.4**

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KUALA LUMPUR: The Sino-Malaysian relationship is crucial for the future of Malaysia, observed a China specialist.

“What is pivotal for Malaysia is to find the right way to engage China.

“There are going to be lots of problems and difficulties, and arguments within the country over this, but the key thing is that the process of engagement leads to the deepening of the relationship between Malaysia and China.

“There ain’t no escape route to Washington,” said Dr Martin Jacques.

Dr Jacques, the author of *When China Rules the World: The End of the Western World and the Birth of a New Global Order*, is in Malaysia to share his insights on the rise of China and its impact to the world.

He was speaking at a talk entitled “China and the World in the 21st Century” at the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations (IDFR) yesterday, which was jointly

Real talk: Dr Jacques delivering a public lecture on ‘China and the World in the 21st Century’, at the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations.

organised by International Movement for A Just World and IDFR.

Analysing Malaysia-China ties, Dr Jacques said China liked and respected Malaysia, which was the first country in the region to recognise China in 1974, despite the fact that both were claimants in the resource-rich South China Sea.

“The Chinese do appreciate lon-



gevity in the relationship. You are seen as an old friend.

“I have never heard the Chinese leaders or people in its Foreign Ministry being critical of Malaysia.

“They always have good things to say, and even love to use Malaysia as an example of how you can have differences and a strong relationship at the same time,” he told

reporters after the talk.

On balancing between the participation in China’s Belt and Road and in the US-led Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), Dr Jacques’ advice for Malaysia was to make suggestions and take initiatives on the Maritime Silk Road as he did not think TPP is “going to happen”.

“I didn’t think it was a good move for Malaysia to sign up for TPP. That was a mistake,” he said.

Instead, Malaysia should “go for it” in terms of cooperation with China on the Belt and Road and think more strategically on what it wants with China, he added.

During Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak’s recent visit to Beijing, he witnessed the signing of 14 business-to-business memorandums of understanding (MoUs) valued at RM143bil, and the signing of 14 government-to-government MoUs to strengthen bilateral trade and economic, cultural and defence cooperation.

Financing for the RM55bil East Coast Rail Line was also secured from China.