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Pakistan PM hopes to spur joint projects

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PAKISTAN Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif aims to stimulate and seek early realisation of mutually beneficial projects in the commercial, industrial and financial sectors during his four-day visit to Malaysia which begins today.

In an interview with Business Times, Nawaz said Pakistan intends to expand its trade with Malaysia and strengthen private sector linkages between the two countries.

"Pakistan and Malaysia enjoy traditionally friendly relations. There exists an institutional basis for enhancing and expanding economic cooperation between the two countries," he said.

Noting that there is at present relatively little Pakistani investment in Malaysia, Nawaz said: "One of the purposes of my visit is to explore investment opportunities for which I have brought leading investors from Pakistan."

Pakistan, he added, is well-positioned to take advantage of investment opportunities in Malaysia because companies such as Pakistan Railways, Telecom Corp, Frontier Works Organisation and National Power Construction Co have the requisite capability to implement turnkey development projects.

On the political front, Nawaz said Pakistan would like to deepen its relations with the region by joining organisations such as the Association of South-East Asian Nations and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) and participate in the Asean Regional Forum as well as the Asia-Europe Meeting.

Nawaz said Pakistan considers Apec as a major economic organisation as it counts as its members the dynamic economies, both developing and developed, of Pacific rim region.

"We believe that Pakistan's participation in the activities of Apec will be mutually beneficial to Pakistan as well as members of the Apec."

This will be Nawaz' first visit to Malaysia since being named the Prime Minister following Pakistan's general election in February this year.

Upon arrival, Nawaz, who will be accompanied by his wife Begum Kulsoom, will seek an audience with Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Ja'afar and Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Najihah.

Nawaz will meet Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Friday, followed by a bilateral meeting which will see the signing of a number of agreements between the two countries.

He will perform the Friday prayers at the National Mosque and later meet Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Nawaz is also scheduled to attend a briefing at the Economic Planning Unit of the Prime Minister's Department.

Later in the afternoon, Nawaz will receive a courtesy call by Economic Adviser to the Government Tun Daim Zainuddin.

The Pakistani Prime Minister will deliver a keynote address at a luncheon hosted by the National Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia on Saturday.

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