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Ankara keen to learn from KL's success story

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PUTRAJAYA, Fri. - Impressed with Malaysia's speedy economic recovery after the regional crisis of 1997/98, Ankara said today it was keen to learn from Kuala Lumpur's success story.

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who arrived here today for a three-day official visit, also expressed hope that Kuala Lumpur could help promote better ties between Turkey and other Asean members.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said Erdogan, who held a four-eyed meeting with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad followed by the full delegation meeting here, was also keen to enhance ties between both nations.

Syed Hamid said both leaders enjoyed warm and cordial discussions that touched on bilateral, multilateral and international issues.

"They are very happy to see the strong co-operation that both countries enjoy, be it at the United Nations or the OIC (Organisation of Islamic Conference).

"Turkey also wants to play a role in the Non-Aligned Movement. They would like to come in as an observer," Syed Hamid told a Press conference after the delegation meeting.

Erdogan, who is here on the invitation of Dr Mahathir, is accompanied by three Cabinet ministers, nine members of parliament and 107 businessmen.

Syed Hamid said the leaders also discussed ways existing cooperation in economy, politics, and cultural and tourism activities could be enhanced, especially through increased participation of the private sector.

"Dr Mahathir emphasised that Malaysian companies would take an active role in the opening the Turkish economy to foreigners. Malaysian private companies, he said, are keen to be involved in the privatisation of many projects there."

Syed Hamid said Erdogan also stressed that Ankara could offer engineering expertise, particularly in the field of ship-building and related heavy industries.

The Foreign Minister said the Malaysia/Turkey Friendship Association would be further activated through an increased exchange of visits, involving both Government officials and the private sector.

He said both leaders also believed more more opportunities in tourism could be created between both countries. "Malaysia would also like Turkey to re-establish the Turkish Airlines flights to Kuala Lumpur through code-sharing with Malaysia Airlines."

Syed Hamid said both leaders and their delegations also touched on current international issues like the situation in the Middle East and Iraq.

He said Kuala Lumpur and Ankara shared common views in matters pertaining to the situation in Iraq and the Middle East road map brokered by the United States.

"We support the road map as a means of achieving peace, if it is a way of stopping violence and bringing both parties to the negotiating table. That's why we are supporting it ... provided that is what the Palestinians want," Syed Hamid said.

He added that in the case of Iraq, both leaders wished to see the territorial integrity of Iraq maintained and a legitimate Iraqi government established.

After the two-hour delegation meeting, Ankara and Kuala Lumpur also

signed a memorandum of understanding on bilateral co-operation in the energy and water management sectors.

Witnessed by both Dr Mahathir and Erdogan, Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu inked the agreement of behalf of the Malaysian Government while Turkey was represented by Transportation and Works Minister Binali Yildirim.

Earlier, Erdogan and his wife Emine were accorded a red carpet welcome as they began a three-day visit to Malaysia today at the Dataran Perdana. Also present was Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali.