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UK eager to rejuvenate ties

THE massive crowd at last night's football friendly between Malaysia and Liverpool in Kuala Lumpur is just another showcase of Malaysians' familiarity with many things British.

Alas, the bond between the two nations have not been similarly reflected in trade and investment, and between both governments, over the past decade.

But some 10,000km away from National Stadium in Bukit Jalil, signs of a revival in these areas were felt during Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib's four-day official visit to the United Kingdom, which ended on Friday.

Najib said he considered the rousing welcome given by the British government to his official visit as an indication that Britain wanted to re-suscitate the long-standing relationship and give it a higher profile.

On Thursday, he was given an audience with Queen Elizabeth II, and inspected a guard of honour before meeting Prime Minister David Cameron and three senior cabinet members.

Speaking to Malaysian journalists on Friday, Najib expressed satisfaction with the outcome of the meeting at 10 Downing Street.

"It has left the impression that Malaysia is an important country for them in their work agenda in the future.

"They acknowledged that they had not accorded due emphasis to political and diplomatic ties with us."

Asked about the possibilities of bilateral trade increasing following his visit, Najib said a significant increase would not be experienced in the immediate future because of the British economy.

Last year, the UK was Malaysia's



18th largest trading partner with trade totalling US\$4.1 billion (RM12.3 billion). One reason for the low volume is said to be the UK giving greater attention to trading with big economies.

It is the eighth largest investor in Malaysia with investments in 394 projects valued at US\$1.7 billion.

The Malaysian Industrial Development Authority (Mida) forecast between RM3 billion and RM5 billion from British investments in Malaysia in the next two to three years in capital-intensive and knowledge-based sectors.

These include manufacturing, oil and gas, education, healthcare, banking and finance.

Mida entered into an agreement with HSBC to step-up promotions in the UK and Europe using the bank's network to attract investors to Malaysia.

In conjunction with Najib's visit, six memorandums were signed to pave the way for initiatives between Malaysian and British interests in education, and oil and gas.

The two countries signed a memorandum of understanding on transnational crimes to help each other in the fight against terrorism, human trafficking, forgery and cyber crimes.

Najib toured the St Pancras railway station redevelopment project, which adopts an underground system.

He discovered that British com-



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak with Islamic leaders in London on Friday during his four-day official visit to the United Kingdom. — Bernama picture

panies were among those given consultancy jobs by the Land Public Transport Commission for the Klang Valley mass rapid transit project.

"And they are interested in participating in the MRT development."

Najib had a roundtable meeting with heads of British companies in manufacturing, education, finance, media, healthcare, aviation, oil and gas, defence and other sectors, during which he impressed on them that they would do well to do business in Malaysia.

To a question, he said he had

briefed Cameron on the security situation in Malaysia and Asean, as well as Malaysia's role in regional security and Afghanistan. The leaders also exchanged views on the situation in the Middle East.

"I asked for his views on improving bilateral ties and he mentioned the possibility of him visiting Malaysia one day. He extended his appreciation to me on my proposal at the United Nations last year for a global movement of moderates.

"He supported it fully, as it is relevant in the context of what we are

facing today and in the future. He indicated that it would be good to have a suitable forum to deliberate on the concept."

During his visit, Najib explained to British business leaders the new policy initiatives of the government in driving the economy towards becoming a high-income nation by 2020.

"They welcomed the things that have been planned, especially the Economic Transformation Programme and the New Economic Model."