



Sultan of Johor Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar sending Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad to the airport in a first-generation Proton Saga after his visit to Johor Baru yesterday. PIC BY HAIRUL ANUAR RAHIM

TEA WITH THE RULER

NST- 11/11/2019 pg. 2

GOOD MEETING FOR PM, SULTAN

Dr Mahathir says he and Sultan Ibrahim will be frank with each other

AHMAD FAIRUZ OTHMAN
AND RIZALMAN HAMMIM
JOHOR BARU
cnews@nstp.com.my

THE meeting between sultan of Johor Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar and Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday was a success in establishing a "frank line of communication" between two personalities who were previously very critical of each other.

The 90-minute meeting, the first since a change in the federal government, also saw a free exchange of views amid a cordial atmosphere, which saw both of them comfortably talking about their problems in the past.

Dr Mahathir shared: "The sultan and I discussed problems faced by us in a free exchange of views. I told him about the people's views towards him and he accepted them well.

"And we agreed that in the future, if there are any problems, I

can see him. We agreed that if there is any issue that we want to communicate (to each other about), we can meet or contact each other.

"He said I can communicate with him. We agree that we can be frank and speak frankly with each other without hiding anything.

"He has opinions of his own, while I have my own opinions," Dr Mahathir said before departing to Kuala Lumpur from the Senai International Airport near here.

The prime minister had earlier been granted a private audience with Sultan Ibrahim at Istana Bukit Serene.

He, however, refused to divulge the problems that he discussed with Sultan Ibrahim.

"We talked about a lot of problems. But I will not mention it here. It is between him and myself," he said.

Sultan Ibrahim and Dr Mahathir had had several exchanges before the May 9 general election last year.

In August 2016, Dr Mahathir had criticised the concept of unity under "Bangsa Johor" as he claimed that it could lead to residents of a state feeling superior over others.

This earned a rebuke from Sultan Ibrahim, who famously told off Dr Mahathir for not knowing the history or background of the



The then Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Iskandar Sultan Ismail with Dr Mahathir in a first-generation Proton Saga on July 10, 1985. FILE PIC

"Bangsa Johor" concept.

In October 2017, Dr Mahathir equated the people of Bugis descent to pirates when referring to former prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

Sultan Ibrahim, who is also of Bugis descent, later said he "felt slighted" by Dr Mahathir's statement.

The prime minister refused to say if there was any discussion with Sultan Ibrahim about the Conference of Rulers' election of a new Yang di-Pertuan Agong on Jan 24.

"That is an issue related to the rulers, and it has nothing to do

with me," he said when queried on whether the topic was discussed in his audience with the ruler.

He described his meeting as a pleasant one, as it was held over evening tea.

He admitted that he had not formally met Sultan Ibrahim since he stepped down from his previous stint as prime minister in 2003.

Meanwhile, the friendliness between Sultan Ibrahim and Dr Mahathir was apparent when the ruler personally drove Dr Mahathir to the airport for his flight back to Kuala Lumpur.