

We welcome strategic partnership proposal, says PM

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SEOUL: Malaysia welcomes South Korea's proposal to elevate their bilateral ties to a strategic partnership to mark the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relationship next year.

Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said officials of both countries would discuss the details of the proposal.

"To commemorate this important period, we have scheduled for the Yang di-Pertuan Agong to make a state visit to the Republic of Korea in the third quarter of next year.

"The visit would certainly highlight the commemorative year and contribute to consolidation of bilateral ties and people-to-people connectivity," said Dr Mahathir in his opening remarks at a bilateral meeting with President Moon Jae-in at the Blue House here yesterday.

Apart from the visit by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Malaysia will co-host several events, including organising a special commemorative reception and a friendly football match between the national teams of the two countries.

Commemorative stamps will be issued and a Malaysian film festival, joint business forum as well as cultural exhibitions will be held here.

Moon said the two countries could expand the cooperation in a way that common people could identify with, in the form of a joint response to the Fourth Industrial Revolution, as well as development of smart cities, and the halal industry.

"I hope we can deepen cooperation in fields such as information, communications and technology (ICT); defence, public health and small- and medi-

um-sized industries.

"Your Shared Prosperity Vision 2030 that you announced recently demonstrates deep insight behind the effort to achieve national integration and sustainable development, while respecting diversity.

"Since the goal of your vision falls in line with my government's vision of realising an innovative and inclusive nation, I hope we can discuss this today," said Moon.

The bilateral meeting was attended by Foreign Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah, Communication and Multimedia Minister Gobind Singh Deo, Water, Land and Natural Resources Minister Dr Xavier Jayakumar and Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad.

Four memoranda of understanding were inked in the pres-

ence of both leaders, namely cooperation on ICT; digital government; healthcare and medical science; and water and sewage management.

At the bilateral meeting, South Korea expressed interest in purchasing 6,000 tonnes of Malaysian palm oil for the United Nations World Food Programme.

Malaysia proposed that the Korean Overseas Development Assistance be used to fund joint research in biodiesel for marine industries and using Malaysian Sustainable Palm Oil certification as a criterion to obtain credit letters from the Bank of Korea.

Dr Mahathir, who ended his official visit to South Korea yesterday, had attended the two-day Asean-Republic of Korea Commemorative Summit in Busan earlier this week.