

## **Malaysia-UAE Sign Key Deals To Enhance Ties**

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ABU DHABI, May 18 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak's first official engagement in Abu Dhabi saw the prime minister witnessing the signing of several significant memoranda of understandings and collaboration agreement, which would further strengthen bilateral ties between Malaysia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Taking centre stage was the formalisation of agreement between both countries to develop a mosque complex in Bandar Malaysia, Sungai Besi - a collaboration in recognition of their strong and long standing bilateral relations.

The agreement between 1Malaysia Development Board (1MDB) and the UAE's General Authority of Islamic Affairs and Endowments (Awqaf) will also provide for the establishment of a learning centre and a Permata centre for talented children in the vicinity.

The deal was signed by 1MDB Chief Executive Officer Mohd Hazem Abd Rahman and Dr Hamdan Musallam Al Mazrouei in the presence of the prime minister and the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Prince Sheikh Mohamed Zayed Al Nahyan at Mushrif Palace.

"This is an inspiring gift as the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque promotes the concept of tolerance, love and mutual understanding towards positive interaction.

"Indeed this is a testimony to the strong bond established between Malaysia and Abu Dhabi. It will go a long way to further cement the relationship between our people," the prime minister said in a press statement released to Malaysian journalists by 1MDB, here Sunday.

Under the agreement, 1MDB, the master developer of Bandar Malaysia, will provide a dedicated site for the project and the UAE's Awqaf will fund the development of its design and construction.

Bandar Malaysia, is the 495-acre of urban redevelopment of the old airport in Sungai Besi which was designed to support Greater KL as a new engine of growth.

It is the twin project of the Tun Razak Exchange (TRX), the partnership projects worth RM18 billion, inked by 1MDB and UAE's Aabar Investments PJS, to help Kuala Lumpur become a global centre for international finance, trade and services.

The deal, signed during the official visit of Sheikh Mohamed in March last year, also saw the

signing of a separate project worth RM21 billion, for a fuel storage facility off Tanjung Piai in Johor.

Inspired by the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque in the UAE's capital Abu Dhabi, the mosque's design will include a technologically-driven Islamic learning centre and a Permata centre, which was the brainchild of prime minister's wife, Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor.

Commenting on the collaboration, Awqaf Chairman Dr Hamdan Mussalam Al Mazrouei said : "This partnership underscores our mission to promote tolerance and awareness of the moderate teaching of Islam through the development of mosques and education centres.

"It is our intention to collaborate with 1MDB to create a centre that serves the needs of the community," he added.

The Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque was created from the cultural and national values preserved and nurtured by the late Sheikh Zayed Sultan Al Nahyan, which stressed mutual respect, tolerance and coexistence among people.

The second was an MoU for cooperation in tourism related activities between the UAE National Council of Tourism and Antiquities and the Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia, to further enhance and promote bilateral cooperation in the field of tourism between both countries.

It was inked by Tourism and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Mohammed Nazri Abdul Aziz and Sheikh Nahyan Mubarak Al Nahyan, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the National Council for Tourism and Antiquities of the UAE.

The UAE is one of the most important tourist markets for Malaysia. In 2013, a total of 19,880 tourists from the UAE visited Malaysia compared to 18,233 tourists in 2012, an increase of 9.3 per cent.

On the other hand, the UAE is a tourist destination for Malaysians.

In 2013, a total 19,830 Malaysians visited the UAE, a slight increase of 8.76 per cent from 18,233 recorded in 2012.

With the conclusion of the MoU, new ventures in tourism activities were expected between Malaysia and the UAE, especially through research and development on tourism related programmes, training, promotional and publicity materials, meetings, conventions and travel marts/fairs and also to encourage economic activities through tourism.

Another MoU signed following the meeting of the prime minister with the Crown Prince was pertaining to cooperation in the field of higher education, which was inked between Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, UAE and the Ministry of Education, Malaysia.

The conclusion of the MoU would pave the way for a closer cooperation that is mutually beneficial for both countries, including opening an opportunity for exchanges of academic staff, exchanges of scholarship for further education and to establish collaborative relations between institutions of higher learning.

Second Education Minister Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research of the UAE Sheikh Hamdan Mubarak Al Nahyan inked the deal at the Mushrif Palace here.

As of January 2014, the total number of the UAE students studying in the various institutions of higher learning in Malaysia was recorded at 187 students, out of which 164 enrolled in private institutions and the remaining 23 students in public institutions.

Malaysia's efforts to attract students have been pro-active and the numbers from the Middle East and North Africa had been on the rise, according to a statement from the Malaysian Foreign Ministry, here.

The prime minister is scheduled to visit Dubai to pay a courtesy call on His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Rashid Al Maktoum, the Vice Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai.

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