

Dr M hopes Proton-Geely tie-up leads to better Proton cars

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From Jamaluddin Muhammad

HANGZHOU, Aug 18 (Bernama) -- Malaysia is keen to tap leading e-commerce group Alibaba's technology for the benefit of Malaysians, said Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad today.

The prime minister said Alibaba Group Holding Ltd has made full use of modern technology for the benefit of the people.

"We like to tap your idea of modern technology so that it can benefit Malaysians," he said when visiting Alibaba's headquarters in co-founder Jack Ma's hometown here.

Dr Mahathir said Alibaba understands the power of technology very well, noting that the online business it created has taken into account delivery system, speed as well as access to information and data.

The prime minister, who is on the second day of his five-day official visit to China, was speaking in front of Ma and Alibaba's top management during a briefing by the latter at the headquarters.

Sharing his own experience in the bakery business, the prime minister said from catering to a small market, it could reach 90,000 people when it went online.

It could probably enlarge the market with the addition of a (door-to-door) delivery system, improved speed and better access to information and data, said Dr Mahathir, who ventured into the bakery business after leaving office in 2003.

Meanwhile, Ma said he was actually inspired to venture into the current business 23 years ago by Dr Mahathir's Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) vision.

"When I first heard about MSC, I didn't know anything about the Internet. Thank you so much, sir, for the inspiration," said Ma, who runs a company whose market capitalisation stood at US\$542 billion as of last June.

Founded in 1999, Alibaba is currently one of the top 10 most valuable and biggest companies in the world, with operations in over 200 countries.

Ma said the company aims for its sales to reach US\$1 trillion next year, or equivalent to a country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

He said he wants to help and share Alibaba's technology with small businesses and youths around the world.

"I want to help small businesses, create more jobs for young people with simple, cheap and easy-to-use technology," he said.

Alibaba has transformed this city located in east China with a population of about 10 million people and known only for its natural scenery and cultural heritage into a high-tech metropolis.

Most of the residents here and throughout this country shop with a scan of their smartphone.

For Malaysia, Ma said various initiatives have been taken by the group to build an inclusive and innovative global trade infrastructure.

They include a one-stop international trade platform to help SMEs sell their products globally, a cloud data centre to develop a traffic management system in Kuala Lumpur to ease congestion, and an e-logistics hub to serve the logistics needs of the Asian market.

Dr Mahathir, accompanied by his wife Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Foreign Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah and International Trade and Industry Minister Darell Leiking, also toured the headquarters.

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