

Mahathir seeks Beijing understanding over Malaysia's fiscal problems

BERNAMA

20/08/2018

From Jamaluddin Muhammad

BEIJING, Aug 20 (Bernama) -- Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Monday asked Beijing to be more sympathetic with regard to Malaysia's current fiscal issues.

The Malaysian prime minister was hopeful that China would understand the situation and would be able to help resolve it.

"We hope that China understands our problem and would be sympathetic in regard to our internal fiscal problems," he said at a joint press conference with his Chinese counterpart, Premier Li Keqiang, following their bilateral meeting here.

Dr Mahathir is on a five-day official visit to China.

"Help us to resolve some of our fiscal problems," said Dr Mahathir.

The new Malaysian government under Pakatan Harapan, which Dr Mahathir leads, is currently facing a debt of about RM1 trillion due to the alleged mismanagement of the country's finances by the previous government.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia-China bilateral ties needed to be further strengthened.

He said China's innovation and technological advancement could contribute to the development of Malaysia.

Li, meanwhile, said there was a need to boost the good bilateral ties to a new level through the opening up of new areas and dimensions in cooperation.

The Chinese premier said both sides agreed to maintain good relations between the two countries for the benefit of their people.

They were also eyeing to scale up bilateral trade with a view to improving the balance of trade between them.

“China is ready to increase imports of competitive goods from Malaysia, especially palm oil and other agricultural products,” he said.

Fielding a question on the current trade war between the United States and China, Dr Mahathir underlined that free trade should be the way forward for all countries.

However, he said, free trade alone was not enough as it must come with fair trade that would benefit small and poor countries as well.

Answering the same question, Li said trade friction, in the short term, would result in countries looking for alternative markets.

However, he said, the global trade and economic environment would worsen if the situation prolonged.

Earlier, the two leaders witnessed the signing of five documents between the two countries at the venue of the bilateral meeting, the Great Hall of the People state building.

They were the Extension Agreement on Bilateral Currency Swap Arrangement; and Protocol on Inspection and Quarantine Requirements for the Export of Frozen Durian.

Also inked were the memorandum of understanding (MoU) on the Development and Promotion of Malaysia Palm Oil Biofuel; MoU on collaboration in Rubberised Bitumen Road Technology and Rubber Tapping Automation and Mechanisation; and MoU on Accounting and Audit Regulatory Cooperation.

-- BERNAMA