

Jokowi impressed with Mahathir 'in driver's seat'

BERNAMA

30/06/2018

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JAKARTA, June 30 (Bernama) -- After a four-eyed meeting with visiting Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad here Friday, President Joko Widodo of Indonesia began the joint press conference with a reference to a Proton car test-drive in 2015.

At the Presidential Palace in Bogor, he recalled that he was seated next to Dr Mahathir who drove the car at a speed of 180 km per hour at the Sepang race circuit in Selangor.

"I was not afraid because it was Tun Mahathir in the driver's seat," said Jokowi, as he is fondly called.

The media and analysts were quick to draw a parallel to Dr Mahathir in the car and Dr Mahathir in the 'driver's seat' of Malaysia now.

They assumed that Jokowi could have implied that he was impressed with the way Dr Mahathir had led the Pakatan Harapan coalition to a stunning victory in the general election last month and become the Prime Minister of Malaysia at the age of 92.

Dr Mahathir, when it came to his turn to address the media, also touched on the test-drive, saying Jokowi did not complain at all when they were speeding along at 180 km per hour, much to the amusement of the Indonesian Cabinet ministers who applauded.

Dr Mahathir had flown into Jakarta on Thursday and was personally welcomed by Jokowi. The official visit was aimed at strengthening bilateral ties that had spanned 60 years.

Indonesia was the first Southeast Asian country that Dr Mahathir chose to visit after he

became the Prime Minister on May 10, a day after the Pakatan Harapan election victory.

Prior to the four-eyed talks and delegations meeting, Dr Mahathir was accorded an official welcome at the Presidential Palace.

Dr Mahathir and his wife, Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, arrived at the palace at 10.10 am and were welcomed by Jokowi and his wife, Iriana Joko Widodo.

Speaking to Malaysian journalists later, Dr Mahathir said the visit was successful.

The two leaders had agreed to address border-related issues, work together to fight the European anti-palm oil campaign and possibly revive the proposal to produce a Malaysia-Indonesia car for the ASEAN market.

Dr Mahathir said the idea of the car was raised in 2015 during the Proton test-drive.

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