

Mahathir suggests Malaysia, Pakistan 'move together' for greater prosperity, stability

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PUTRAJAYA, Nov 21 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad spoke of the “remarkable similarities” Malaysia and Pakistan share when he addressed a luncheon he hosted for visiting Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan.

He said the two countries have inherited similar problems in many areas from the past administrations and share a similar vision in eradicating corruption and addressing economic issues to develop the countries as well as to redeem their wealth.

“Now is the time that we move together. I believe in the importance of cooperation that is based on mutual respect, and that successful and dynamic relations between Malaysia and Pakistan would contribute to our own prosperity and stability.

“I am happy to see that the new Pakistani government under the leadership of Imran Khan is steering Pakistan towards progress and a corruption-free country.

"Historic reforms have been carried out under your (Imran Khan) leadership that have made Pakistan more open and competitive," Dr Mahathir said in his speech at the luncheon held at Seri Perdana.

Imran Khan is on a two-day official visit to Malaysia at the invitation of Dr Mahathir. It is his maiden visit since assuming office in August. He arrived yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said he is honoured by Imran Khan’s visit. The last visit by a Pakistan prime minister was 13 years ago, in 2005, when the then Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani visited Malaysia.

“Indeed, Your Excellency’s visit to Malaysia today represents a major milestone in

Malaysia-Pakistan relations as we generate a momentum for an even more dynamic and richer relationship. Together we can realise our combined potentials and achieve better lives for our people," said Dr Mahathir.

He said he was also happy to see the continuous friendly relations that Malaysia and Pakistan have had since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1967.

"Malaysia considers Pakistan as its close partner in the South Asian region and your visit today is an excellent opportunity to re-emphasise our commitments and reaffirm our longstanding friendship between our two countries.

"I believe there is much more that could be achieved when there are trust, understanding and closeness between leaders and countries," he said.

Referring to their bilateral meeting earlier, Dr Mahathir said they were able to discuss many areas of bilateral cooperation and take stock of the progress in political and economic matters, adding that economic cooperation is showing positive growth.

"I believe there is more that could be done for our bilateral trade to grow. Both countries should also promote greater business linkages between our private sectors," he said.

Dr Mahathir said there are potential areas that can be tapped to exploit the full potential of the Malaysia-Pakistan Closer Economic Partnership Agreement (MPCEPA) which was signed in November 2007.

"Our investments are progressing well with an increase in investments from Malaysia to Pakistan, mainly in telecommunications, energy, construction and banking. I would like to acknowledge the opportunity and confidence given by Your Excellency to a number of Malaysian companies currently involved in various projects in Pakistan," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he also hoped that more Malaysian companies will be given the

opportunity to be more involved in Pakistan's economy.

"I am also confident that the bilateral relations between Malaysia and Pakistan will continue to be nourished at every level, including our young generation.

"Both sides should continue to promote mutual respect and understanding so that these ties will be much stronger in the years to come," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he is confident that Imran Khan's visit will spur greater cooperation and exchanges between the two countries, their people and regions.

Imran Khan, in his speech, said he hopes that Pakistan and Malaysia will strengthen their relations which he added should not be based just on trade but also love and respect.

"InshaAllah (God willing), as Malaysia gets out of its current economic problems, Pakistan-Malaysia trade and economic cooperation will increase. This will take both countries' relations to a new level," he said.

Recalling his conversation with Dr Mahathir some 20 years ago when he attended a conference in Malaysia, Imran Khan reiterated that he personally looks upon the Malaysian prime minister as a statesman and leader, and hopes to learn from Malaysia's experience to transform and develop the country's economy.

He also recalled how Dr Mahathir transformed Malaysia, from a raw material producing country to a developed economy, raising its investment and exports.

"I also remember inviting you (Dr Mahathir) to come to Pakistan to attend a conference (in 2006) and Dr Mahathir kindly accepted my invitation even when Pakistan was in the middle of a war.

"I see Dr Mahathir as a leader who is brave to speak up to the Americans on the war that

makes Muslims suffer. Those words from Dr Mahathir are what most of the intellectuals and Islamic preachers talk about," he said.

Imran Khan said Pakistan followed the electoral victory of the 93-year-old veteran politician and his becoming the prime minister again following the 14th general election in May.

"The victory came at a time when Pakistan was preparing for a change of government and the Pakistan PTI (Tehreek-e-Insaf) party took Dr Mahathir's victory as an example and also stood firm against corruption in Pakistan," he said.

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