

## **Proton to build assembly plant in Pakistan**

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**From Kamarul Ariffin Md Yassin**

ISLAMABAD, March 21 (Bernama) -- National carmaker, Proton will collaborate with a local partner to establish a manufacturing assembly plant in Pakistan, its first in South Asia region.

Malaysia High Commissioner to Pakistan Ikram Mohammad Ibrahim said an agreement was inked by Proton and its local partner, Alhaj Automotive last year.

“Proton felt the potential for its cars in Pakistan is huge, which led to its partnership with Alhaj Automotive to establish an assembly plant near Karachi in Sindh province.

“This is significant because it will be Proton’s first (assembly) plant in South Asia because the population of Pakistan is 210 million,” he told Malaysian media at the high commission here.

Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his Pakistani counterpart Imran Khan are expected to witness the symbolic groundbreaking ceremony of Proton’s plant tomorrow.

Dr Mahathir will begin his three-day official visit to Pakistan today.

According to Ikram, the construction of the car plant was one of the important elements of bilateral trade and investment relationship between the two countries as Proton was Dr Mahathir’s brainchild during his first tenure as the Prime Minister.



Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad

Both leaders he said, would also have an in-depth discussion on efforts to increase trade relations between the two countries.

Last year, total trade between Malaysia and Pakistan stood at RM5.91 billion, which was an increase of 2.5 per cent compared to RM5.76 billion in 2017.

Pakistan is Malaysia's third largest trading partner in South Asia.

Ikram said Pakistan is Malaysia's largest export market in South Asia and the third for import destination.

"In terms of bilateral trade, Malaysia is Pakistan's 16th largest trading partner last year," he said.

On investment, Malaysia is Pakistan's third largest foreign investor behind China and the United Kingdom for financial year 2017/2018 according to statistics provided by the State Bank of Pakistan, he added.

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