

## **Knowing each other's strengths bodes well for Malaysia, Pakistan**

**BERNAMA**

**24/03/2019**

**From Kamarul Ariffin Md Yassin**

ISLAMABAD, March 24 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's three-day official visit to Pakistan proved to be a fruitful mission especially in terms of knowing each other strengths for mutual benefits in the long run.

There are many things both Islamic countries can do to complement each other.

"There are many fields (for cooperation between Malaysia and Pakistan). But (before this ), we did not know of their capabilities and they did not know of our capabilities. Only when we are here, can we see their strengths," Dr Mahathir told the Malaysian media at the end of the visit on Saturday.

Pakistan today is not the same Pakistan that he visited in 1984, 1997 and 2002, when he was prime minister for the first time.

Many think Pakistan as "a poor military country" due to the bad perception on the country. And not many people know that the South Asian country is a producer of military vehicles and the JF-17 Thunder fighter jet. In fact they sell these products to other countries.

Therefore, it's no surprise that Pakistan is trying to persuade several countries including Malaysia to buy the JF-17 Thunder fighter jet.

"They have been able to build aircraft (JF-17 Thunder). The aircraft demonstrated (during the Pakistan Day parade) performed very well. I know Pakistan would like to sell their planes to us," he said.

One of the achievements of the visit was witnessed on the second day where Dr Mahathir and his Pakistani counterpart Imran Khan officiated the groundbreaking for Proton's manufacturing assembly plant in the country.

The assembly plant will be built near Karachi in Sindh province, and it will be the Proton's first plant in the South Asian region.

The plant will have a production capacity of 25,000 units a year starting June 2020, with the Saga as the first model.

"When they (Pakistan) agreed with us to the proposal to manufacture our (Proton) cars, I felt it was a good thing. If they could produce military vehicles, I don't think other types of vehicles would be much of a problem," Dr Mahathir said.

Even though the Prime Minister showed that he was impressed on how Pakistan has developed and believed that cooperation with Pakistan will really benefit Malaysia, Malaysia will not take sides on the Pakistan-India issue where tensions are running high between the two neighbours.

"Diplomatically we decided to be friendly with everyone. We do not care what their internal politics and internal ideologies are but we want to be friendly with them, so that we can trade with them, and we can solve a lot things that we need from them.

"Malaysia today officially has no enemies except for Israel. We had never had any relations with Israel. It's not because we are against the Jews. it's because of the wrong things they do," he said.

For Pakistan, the country took pride in the way Malaysia has developed and raised the standard of living of Malaysians under the premiership of Dr Mahathir and hoped to learn many things from Malaysia.

“During the 1998 Southeast Asia economic crisis, Malaysia was the only one that managed to get out of the crisis through homegrown solutions. We Pakistan now face a difficult economic situation ... and so many things to do to get out from it,” said Imran.

Imran was also impressed on how Malaysia managed to develop especially by having more foreign direct investment (FDI) and technology transfer, besides successfully developing the tourism industry.

“One area we can get a very quick return is to learn from Malaysia’s experience in tourism. Malaysia, from what we were told generated almost US\$22 billion (yearly) from tourism.

“(Unlike) Pakistan with vast resources generates nothing from tourism. We have discussed how to seek help from Malaysia to develop the tourism industry,” the Pakistani premier said.

Dr Mahathir’s visit was at the invitation of Imran to attend the Pakistan Day celebration, which is observed on March 23 every year.

On Friday, Dr Mahathir was conferred the *Nishan-e-Pakistan* or Order of Pakistan, the country’s highest civilian award, by Pakistan President Dr Arif Alivi at the Aiwan-e-Sadr Presidential Palace.

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