

\$900m agreements with Malaysia to be signed today

ISLAMABAD: Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad arrived here on Thursday evening for a three-day visit to Pakistan.

The Malaysian leader is visiting Pakistan on the invitation of Prime Minister Imran Khan. He will be the chief guest at the Pakistan Day parade on March 23.

Mr Mohamad, accompanied by a high-level delegation, including several leading businessmen, was received at the Nur Khan airbase by PM Khan and his cabinet members.

Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) covering \$800-\$900 million worth of investments with Malaysian investors would be signed on Friday (today), covering deals in IT, telecom, power generation, textile, agriculture, and halal food industries.

The Malaysian prime minister's bilateral engagements also include meeting with President Arif Alvi and a one-on-one meeting with Prime Minister Khan, followed by delegation-level talks, state radio network reported.

Mahathir Mohamad arrives on a three-day visit; Imran receives Malaysian leader at Nur Khan airbase

The two prime ministers are scheduled to speak at the roundtable meeting of the chief executive officers, who desire to invest in Pakistan's automobile and telecommunication sectors.

More than 25 heads of top Malaysian companies are accompanying the Malaysian prime minister.

Board of Investment chairman Haroon Sharif told newsmen that joint venture agreements would be signed in telecom, automobile and halal food sectors.

Within months of Prime Minister Khan's visit to Malaysia, business-to-business partnership is moving ahead, and now it was time to consolidate it, Mr Haroon said.

The 'eDetco Group' of Malaysia which is the first and leading regional integrated telecommunications infrastructure services company in Asia specialising in end-to-end solutions in tower services including co-locations, build-to-start energy, transmission and operation and maintenance, will sign agreements with Telenor, Zong and Mobilink, while Proton Holdings will sign agreement with Alhaj FAW company for manufacturing electric cars in Pakistan.

Another Malaysian enterprise will sign agreement with Fauji Meat, the leading halal meat processing facility in Pakistan, for the export of halal meat from Pakistan.

The visit of Dr Mohamad is the beginning of a transformational relationship between Pakistan and Malaysia, Mr Haroon said, adding that the market Pakistan was offering was the opening of a new market for them in this region.

“It is market of mutual benefit and soon Pakistan will connect with the western China.”

The growing interaction between government-to-government and business-to-business is a long-term business partnership and it would open a gateway to East Asian economies, he said.

“If Pakistan has to come to level of East Asia which is an important block of Asean, Pakistan has to learn from experiences of these countries,” Mr Haroon said.

The visit of Malaysian investors is a signal of a major shift in the present government’s policy to expand economic and trade relations with other countries. PM’s Adviser on Investment Razak Dawood who also spoke during the news conference, said that over the past five years, Pakistan was having trade and economic relations with China, which helped Pakistan immensely in power sector and infrastructure development.

The present government expanded these relations further to include Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, Qatar and now Malaysia. Investment opportunities and incentives were equal for all countries which were investing in Pakistan, Mr Dawood said.

The advantage of having trade and investment relations with Malaysia would be to enter markets of East Asian countries since Malaysia’s inroad to Asean was much better, Mr Dawood said.

He said that Malaysian investors were long-term players and they would like to see their good share in the market of this region.

“While Pakistan will tap markets in East Asia through Malaysia, our region will provide equal opportunities to businessmen and investors from Malaysia and other Asean countries to the Central Asian and Middle East markets,” he said.

“Our policy will be that once business-to-business engagement with Malaysians is strengthened, we will get into relations with East Asian countries through Malaysia,” he said.

Malaysia offers an opportunity for Pakistan to open up the Asean market for trade and investment through strategic partnerships. Asean is a market of estimated 651 million people, with an estimated GDP of \$3 trillion and high human development index.

Pakistan is gearing up to tap into one of the largest commercial hubs of the world – Asean, which has goods trade volume of around \$2.6 trillion, services of volume of around \$703 billion and \$136 billion in foreign direct investment.

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