

# Ties with China take leap forward

From Zainon Ahmad

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SHENZHEN, Mon. — The Prime Minister today described Malaysia's relations with China as having taken a "leap forward" following his meetings with Chinese national as well as provincial leaders during his 10-day visit.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said trade relations would now be on a higher gear after the signing of more than 30 agreements and memorandums of understanding (MOUs) between Malaysian companies and Chinese enterprises.

So far RM279.8 million worth of export sales/contracts, RM60.4 million worth of import contracts and RM1,154 million worth of joint ventures are being finalised.

"This is the most successful mission abroad I have led so far," he said at a Press conference to mark the end of his China visit — his longest to one country.

In the afternoon, he visited the Shekou Industrial Zone and in the evening he attended a dinner hosted by Malaysian businessmen in honour of his delegation and Chinese businessmen.

# Dr M: East Asia moving towards closer co-operation

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ers to push when we ourselves are not pushing that hard."

He said whether there was an EAEC or not and whether other countries liked it or not, East Asian countries were already working and co-operating closely for their mutual benefit.

For instance, even Malaysia, which used to expect only foreigners to invest in Malaysia, were now going out to invest in other East Asian countries like China and Vietnam.

"And that is what co-operation is all about," he said.

One of the objectives of

the proposed EAEC, apart from the adoption of a common stand on international trade issues, was to enable countries in East Asia to help each other to develop.

Dr Mahathir said this was already happening, adding that the mutual help and mutual learning process among Asean countries were already spreading to other countries in the East Asian region.

To a question on whether the new openness in China would be reversed after the passing of Chinese patriarch Deng Xiaoping, Dr Mahathir said: "Nothing is ever certain in the affairs of a nation."

However, he added that so

many things have changed in China, especially the ongoing transition from the command economy to "socialist market economy," that a change in leadership would not be able to reverse it completely.

On whether during his discussion with top Chinese leaders he brought up the question of the imbalance in trade in China's favour, he said he did not.

He said each country's trade figures did not tally with those of the other. According to Chinese figures, they import more from Malaysia. This includes Malaysian products bought from third countries like Hong Kong and Singapore.

Tomorrow, he attends the foundation stone-laying ceremony for Hainan Chinese Culture and Arts Centre being developed by a Malaysian company and visits the China Hainan Economic Restructuring Research Institute on Hainan Island before leaving for Kuala Lumpur.

Dr Mahathir said as a result of changes in policies in Malaysia and China, there would be more interaction between their officials and businessmen. More Chinese leaders would be visiting Malaysia soon.

As a result of his personal contacts with Chinese leaders, he felt that China was more committed now to its support for the Asean proposal for the establishment of the East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC).

"We feel that the commitment is greater and much more open," he said.

Considering the opposition of the US and many others to the proposal and considering that Japan had not made a commitment, "one would expect they would modify their stand".

"But they remain quite firm in their support — a measure of their commitment," he added.

The Prime Minister said it was up to Asean to push harder for the adoption of the EAEC proposal saying that "we cannot expect oth-

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