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MAHATHIR, CHIRAC BEGIN TALKS

LANGKAWI, Nov 17 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and French President Jacques Chirac, who arrived here yesterday for a working visit, began their meeting at a resort today.

The two leaders are expected to discuss bilateral and international issues such as efforts to regulate currency trading and the United States probe into a gas deal in Iran involving Malaysian and French petroleum companies.

US Deputy Secretary of State for Energy, Sanctions and Commodities William Ramsay is due to arrive here tomorrow to probe the US\$2 billion joint venture between Petronas, France's Total SA and Russia's Gazprom to develop an oil field in Iran.

Both leaders are expected to hold a joint news conference after their discussions.

Chirac is in Malaysia after attending a gathering of French-speaking countries in Hanoi, Vietnam. His visit is the first by a French head of state to Malaysia.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim is scheduled to call on Chirac today before he leaves the country. -- BERNAMA

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