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China proposes move to strengthen ties

CHINA yesterday offered several suggestions on ways to further develop relations with Malaysia.

Its Information Department director-general Zhu Bangzao, who is the spokesman for China's Prime Minister Zhu Rongji, said these include sustaining good momentum of views exchanged at high levels and exchange of cooperation between the two countries in all fields.

The Chinese Premier had forwarded these suggestions to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad during their discussions.

"Both countries should also continue to expand mutually beneficial economic cooperation and trade by actively exploring new ways and methods to increase commodities and trade," he said at a press conference in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Other suggestions include cooperation in science and technology, continuous cultural and education exchanges and enhancing cooperation in international and regional issues.

"They (both leaders) also agreed that the important task of East Asia at the moment is to stress on certain economic, financial, scientific and technological cooperation, which should be fully reflected at the upcoming Asean plus three informal summit in Manila," he said.

Trade between Malaysia and China in the past four years have increased to RM15.1 billion.

On whether the Chinese Prime Minister is ready to sign the proposed regional code of conduct for the South China Sea at the Association of South-East Asian Nations (Asean) meeting in Manila, Zhu said: "I do not think the code of conduct should be discussed at the Asean 10-plus-three meeting.

"We believe it should be discussed among relevant parties," he added.

The Chinese Premier is scheduled to attend the Asean informal summit which is held between November 24 and November 28 in Manila.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar will be representing Dr Mahathir at the meeting.

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