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## Malaysia-China ties growing

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PUTRAJAYA, Tues. - Emerging from a two-hour bilateral meeting with his Chinese counterpart Zhu Rongji today, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad declared that relations between both countries are heading towards new heights.

The two leaders said there were no major differences of opinion between the countries; in fact, they held similar views on many international issues and agreed that all problems should be resolved through discussion.

Dr Mahathir, expressing confidence that the relationship would "go from strength to strength in the future", said Malaysia and China were very close in terms of their understanding and approach towards the resolution of problems internationally.

"We have reached an agreement on many areas. We also believe that we should take our time in our discussions of problems in order to be able to resolve them very carefully," he said after the meeting at the Prime Minister's Department.

Zhu arrived in Malaysia yesterday for a five-day official visit. He heads a 107-member delegation, comprising Foreign Minister Tang Xia Juan, Agriculture Minister Chen Yao Bang, Minister of Special Assistance Lin Hua Qiu and Vice-Governor of the People's Bank of China Yan Hai Wang.

This is his first stop on a 12-day regional tour also taking in the Philippines, Singapore and Vietnam - all members of Asean.

Zhu will also attend the Asean summit which opens in Manila on Nov 28.

Dr Mahathir, who visited China in August, said the frequency of visits between the two leaders demonstrated the closeness of their relationship and cooperation.

"As a result of these visits, we have been able to discuss many matters pertaining to bilateral relations and also the situation in the region, in East Asia and the world."

Zhu reciprocated, saying that the meetings enabled them to reach a broad consensus on many bilateral, regional and global issues.

"There are no pressing issues between China and Malaysia. Even the problems that exist now are not insurmountable through consultation."

During their last meeting in China, Zhu said Dr Mahathir had forwarded many suggestions towards enhancing trade and cooperation.

"This has materialised today with the signing of agreements on three areas, and more are in the pipeline.

"Therefore, I am sure this momentum of cooperation in economic matters, politics and international forums will be continued in the future."

Zhu also praised Malaysia and its people for their unity and ability to overcome the economic crisis.

Earlier, both leaders witnessed the signing of three agreements on cultural cooperation, the establishment of banking institutions in both countries and on the exchange of animals between the State Forestry Administration of China and the Science, Technology and Environment Ministry.

At a Press conference later, Dr Mahathir was asked for his outlook on the prospect of growth in the region following the economic crisis and the challenges facing the countries.

He said although Malaysia and the other affected nations had recovered, they had to be very careful as the destructive forces which had decapitated their economies might launch a new attack.

He said as Malaysia had taken steps to insulate its economy from currency attacks, its economy was expected to be more stable and less likely to undergo the same experience of two years ago.

Dr Mahathir said although the affected economies had recovered, it would take some time for them to reach the same level of growth registered before the crisis.

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