

PM: Malaysia will continue close ties with Indonesia

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KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia will continue with the existing close ties with Indonesia and look at various co-operation agreements to improve them, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

The Prime Minister said Indonesia was "very close" with Malaysia and both countries have trade links which span a long time.

"If Indonesia asks us for co-operation, we will definitely provide them," he said after launching the government multipurpose smartcard at Iris Smart Technology Complex.

He said Malaysia was looking seriously at joint ventures to help revive the Indonesian economy.

"We have many trade links with Indonesia, such as the triangle growth concept, and these are important to us. And there is also the illegal immigrants issue," he added.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia would face problems if it failed to help its neighbour to revive its economy.

On the transition of power to President Megawati Sukarnoputri, Dr Mahathir said it was a matter for Indonesia to decide.

"Every Indonesian has the right to decide or choose people into power for the republic. It is their people who evaluate who they want to be their president," he added.

To a question that two presidents from Asean countries had been "ousted" by the people and its effect on Asean, Dr Mahathir said: "There will be no impact. Not quite."

"It is only some changes are taking place. We have this in the Philippines and now Indonesia. Thailand also had changed its Prime Minister," he added.

On local politics, Dr Mahathir said DAP chairman Lim Kit Siang was inflicted with "a disease — not wanting to release his chairman's post."

"He has said many times before he wants to relinquish his post but never did so. This is the disease in him," Dr Mahathir said.