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# Mahathir urges Asean countries to work together

**PUTRAJAYA, Tues:** Asean countries will have to work together to overcome the effects of the slowdown in the US economy.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said this after receiving Myanmar Prime Minister Senior Gen Than Shwe at his office here today.

Both leaders emphasised that there is a need for Asean countries to work closely and to look at its own markets before venturing into other markets.

Mahathir chaired a one-hour close door meeting with delegations from both the countries.

At a press briefing after the meeting, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Syed Jaafar Albar said most Asean countries will be affected by the recent developments that include the slowdown in US economic activities.

Syed Hamid said both leaders also agree on the need for Asean countries to increase trade with each other where bilateral trade payment or accounts trading are arranged so that each country can increase trade without making payments in foreign currencies.

Asean countries should instead set off against each others products or just pay the difference for the products imported or exported so that there will be less requirement for foreign exchange and hence, lessen the burden of countries that do not have sufficient foreign exchange.

Than Shwe's three-day working visit to Malaysia, beginning today, follows Mahathir's visit to Myanmar in January.