

PM witnesses signing of bilateral agreements

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DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's first assignment after arriving in Rabat on Monday was to meet his Moroccan counterpart, Abderrahmane Youssoufi yesterday, shortly before witnessing the signing of six bilateral agreements.

Soon after the meeting at Abderrahmane's office, the Prime Minister proceeded to the Foreign Ministry for the delegation meeting which was followed by the signing of the agreements. Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar signed on Malaysia's behalf.

The agreements were intended to promote two-way trade besides enhancing socio-political exchanges.

Petronas also signed two reconnaissance contracts with Onarep, the Moroccan equivalent of the national oil company. These offer Petronas on-shore and off-shore explo-

ration rights in Morocco.

Dr Mahathir, his wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, several Cabinet Ministers, two Menteri Besar and senior Government officers arrived on Monday for a four-day visit. Dr Mahathir was last here for the Organisation of Islamic Countries in 1994.

Yesterday, Dr Mahathir visited the Mohammed V Mausoleum where he signed the visitors book, referred to here as the Golden Book. He also had an audience with the Moroccan monarch, King Mohammad VI, which was followed by a meeting with Malaysian students.

One of yesterday's highlights was his address and dialogue with Moroccan Islamic intellectuals, think-tanks and Parliamentarians at the Foreign Ministry.

Dr Mahathir's entourage includes

some 70 businessmen who were meeting their counterparts in Casablanca, about an hour's ride by road from here. Dr Mahathir will speak to businessmen in Casablanca today.

At a joint Press conference after the delegation meeting, both Prime Ministers commented on the future bilateral relations of the two countries, saying the way forward would be in enhancing trade and economic relations to be on par with the political co-operation.

Dr Mahathir said the signing of the six agreements would pave the way for stronger two-way co-operation.

Asked to comment on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, he said an enduring political situation lies with negotiations. "But you cannot negotiate with guns pointed at you."