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PM: Special talks fruitful and substantial

MALAYSIA-Thailand relations took a step forward yesterday with a unique meeting of the Cabinets of the two countries, led by their Prime Ministers.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Dr Thaksin Shinawatra, speaking to the Press after the meeting at a hotel here, described the discussions as fruitful and substantial.

Dr Mahathir, who spoke first, said the four-eyed meeting between them achieved breakthroughs on several matters which would be taken up at ministerial and official levels.

"A meeting of this nature has never happened before. It was held in an informal setting but I am happy to tell you that the discussions were substantive and real and point the way to resolving common problems.

"We may include other neighbours, but this meeting between Malaysia and Thailand could lead the way to more neighbourly co-operation for mutual good," said the Prime Minister.

Responding, Thaksin said: "We will now identify strategies so that we can prosper together."

He said the two countries could combine their resources and talents in joint marketing and production efforts in economic fields, based on mutual consultations.

"We hope to learn from each other by talking candidly. There could be areas of co-operation in automobile and hi-tech," said Thaksin.

Cabinet Ministers from both Malaysia and Thailand held separate meetings to discuss closer co-operation in their respective portfolios.

At the meeting, Thaksin, in his opening remarks, had stressed the need for Thailand and Malaysia to work together to fight terrorism, crime and illicit activities along their common border.

He said one area of co-operation that the two countries should emphasise was the cross-border flow of people and products.

He hoped both countries would work together to develop infrastructure, particularly in expanding road, sea and air links.

The meeting also discussed the gas pipeline project under the Joint Development Area, new Customs checkpoints along the border and issues concerning Thai workers in Malaysia.