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Dr M: Meeting with Bush warm, doesn't reflect low point in ties

EVIAN (France), Mon. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad described his meeting with US President George W. Bush at Evian as "warm".

The two leaders were at the scenic French alpine town for the enlarged dialogue ahead of the summit of the Group of Eight (G8).

The US President walked up to the Prime Minister and wanted to know how he was doing.

Bush asked whether Dr Mahathir was still in power, to which the Prime Minister replied, "till October".

Asked about comments by US Ambassador to Kuala Lumpur Marie Huhtala that bilateral relations between Malaysia and the United States were at a "low point", Dr Mahathir replied, "it was not reflected in Bush's attitude towards me. In fact he was patting me on my back".

It was a friendly gesture and Bush also shook hands with the Prime Minister when he was leaving.

Concerns had been expressed that Malaysia-US relations had been affected as a result of Kuala Lumpur's strong stance against the invasion of Iraq.

Dr Mahathir also held bilateral meetings with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

During the meeting, the two leaders also touched on the similarities of international issues.

Putin, who is due to visit Malaysia this year, is looking forward to the visit.

Dr Mahathir also held bilateral meetings with Chinese President Hu Jintao and South African President Thabo Mbeki.