

Better mechanism needed to resolve dispute with Jakarta
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Prime Minister Najib Razak says a better mechanism is needed to resolve border issues with Indonesia, following a maritime dispute that sparked angry protests.

Tensions between the two neighbours flared-up last month, triggered by the detention of Malaysian fishermen and Indonesian officials in disputed waters, leading to protests including the flinging of faeces at the Malaysian embassy in Jakarta.

Najib, who spoke to Indonesian president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono on Friday to extend Eid al Fitr greetings, said both leaders agreed to more talks and a mechanism to resolve border disputes in future, the Star daily reported.

NONE "We must do whatever it takes to ensure that we do not destroy (our relationship) because our links go deep, whether in the fields of economy, social or politics," Najib was quoted as saying.

"There needs to be a mechanism to help resolve border issues between the two countries and... the need for more talks to enhance the relationship," he added. An aide to the premier confirmed his remarks but refused further comment.

Last week, the two countries' foreign ministers met to agree on measures aimed at preventing a recurrence of the Aug 13 incident which saw seven Malaysian fishermen detained in disputed waters off southern Malaysia by Indonesian authorities who accused them of straying into their territory.

Three of the Indonesian officials were also detained by Malaysian maritime authorities who intercepted the group as they were being taken back to Indonesia. All have now been released.

The two sides have agreed to hold meetings in October and November to resolve the maritime border issue with discussions covering zones in the Sulawesi Sea, the southernmost part of the Straits of Malacca, the South China Sea, and possibly the Singapore Straits.

Malaysia has said that if there was no resolution, the border dispute could end up in the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

- AFP