

PM: We want to move forward

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THERE is a mood to do more and to do better in bilateral relations between Malaysia and China, especially after 30 years of successful relations.

This is the impression that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has after five days of being in China.

"There is very good understanding between the two countries and we would like to see the bilateral relations move forward by extending our relations and focusing on new areas of co-operation," Abdullah said at a Press conference at the end of his official visit to Beijing and Shanghai.

It is understood that nine investment bankers who had a breakfast meeting with Abdullah expressed confidence about doing business in Malaysia and told the Prime Minister that "they felt safe".

Asked about the meeting with the bankers, Abdullah said they expressed satisfaction with government efforts to improve Government-linked companies (GLCs). They were told that the Government would accept foreign participation in the GLCs but it would be no more than 30 per cent equity.

The Prime Minister told them it was an opportunity to "get to know you".

The nine who had breakfast with the Prime Minister were the managing director and head of Pacific Rim Investment Banking, Merrill Lynch, Damian Chunilal; Asia Pacific JP Morgan chairman Ralph Parks; resident executive director for Asia and Oceania, Japan Bank for International Co-operation Fumio Hoshi; Citigroup Global Markets Asia Ltd

chairman Francis Leung; Asia Pacific Barclays Capital chairman and chief executive Robert Morrice; chairman and CEO, Morgan Stanley Asia, Alasdair Morrison; chairman and CEO Asia-Pacific Region, Credit Suisse First Boston, Paul Calello; CEO, The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Ltd, Michael Smith; and president of Goldman Sachs (Asia), Richard Gnodde.

Abdullah said he was happy with the visit.

The new areas that should be explored include agriculture, bio-technology, high technology, education, health and ICT.

"These are areas that offer tremendous opportunities to Chinese and Malaysian businessmen to set up joint ventures and to develop partnerships," he said.

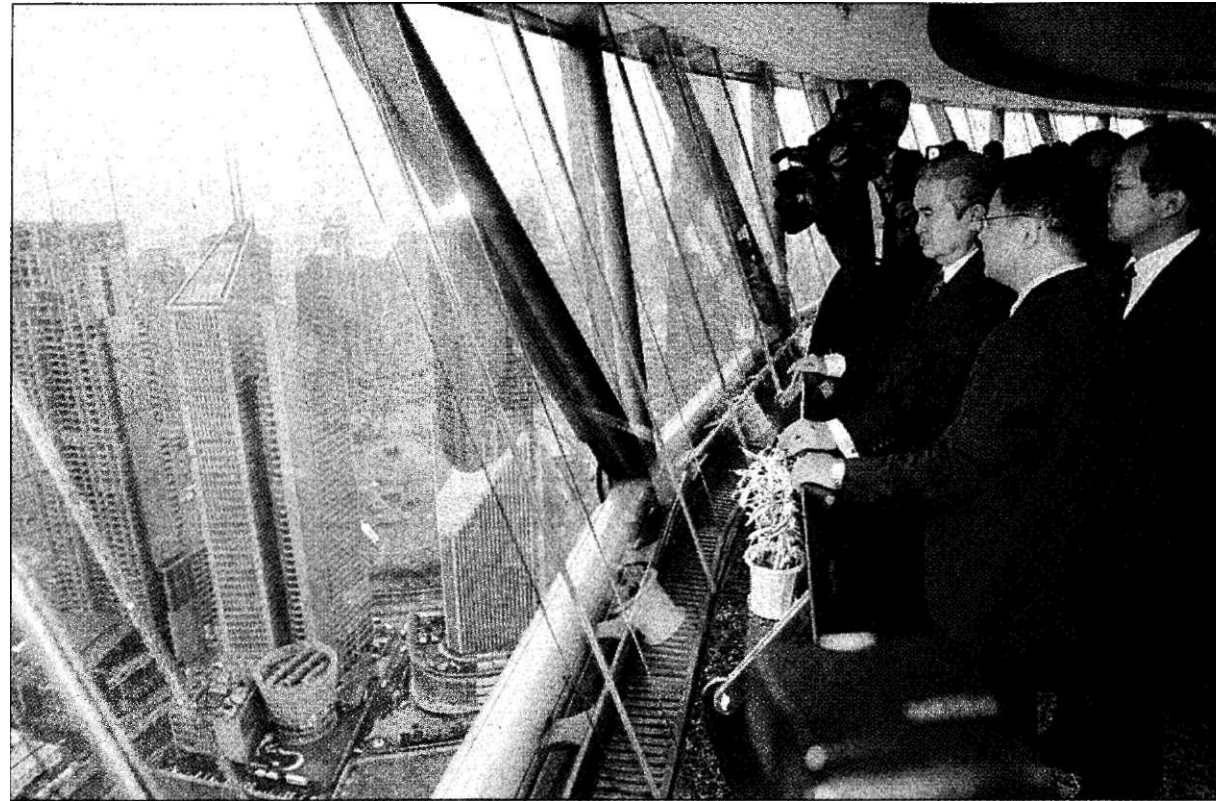
During the visit, several memorandums of understanding and agreement were signed between the private sectors of the two countries as well as between the two Governments.

Accompanied by a high-powered delegation of nine ministers, senior government officials and members of the private sector, Abdullah's visit also marked the 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Malaysia and China.

During the visit, Abdullah held discussions with Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao and paid a courtesy call on President Hu Jintao in Beijing.

In Shanghai, he met mayor Han Zheng and vice-mayor Tang Dengjie. Abdullah also met members of the Shanghai Overseas Chamber of Commerce and Industry, who expressed interest in investing in Malaysia and welcomed partnerships with Malaysian companies.

In a joint communique issued at the



SPRAWLING METROPOLIS: Abdullah getting a bird's eye view of Shanghai while visiting the Pearl Oriental Tower on the final day of his five-day official visit to China. — Bernama picture

end of the visit, the leaders of the two nations reaffirmed the significance of two earlier documents guiding the development of Malaysia-China ties. They are the 1974 Communique on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations, and the 1999 Framework for the Future Bilateral Co-operation between China and Malaysia.

The two sides agreed to consolidate bilateral relations and maintain regular communication at all levels, from non-governmental organisations to people-to-people, and between the leaders.

They agreed that annual consultations between the two ministries of foreign affairs would continue to discuss bilateral, regional and international issues of common concern.

The joint communique said they also agreed to strengthen co-operation in agricultural R&D in rice planting, aquaculture and other related fields.

On the political front, they expressed deep concern over the situation in the Middle East and Iraq, and welcomed progress made in the Six-Party Talks on the nuclear issue

in the Korean peninsula.

Other areas covered in the 14-point communique were ways to:

- Improve co-operation in transportation, energy and finance;
- Recognise the significance of science and technology in the development of the two countries and work together towards the establishment of the Asia-Pacific Space Co-operation Organisation; and
- Expand exchanges and co-operation in culture, education and public health.

They also decided to establish an

epidemic reporting mechanism to enhance co-operation in the prevention and control of infectious diseases.

Malaysia emphasised and reaffirmed its adherence to the "One China" policy, and both nations reaffirmed their commitment to the fight against terrorism in all its forms.

They stressed the need for the international community to address both the symptoms and causes of terrorism, and reiterated their opposition to linking terrorism with any specific religion or ethnic group.

The communique also called for enhancing regional and international peace and development, and the two nations agreed to strengthen consultations and co-ordination at the United Nations, Asian Regional Forum, Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation, Asia Europe Meeting and World Trade Organisation.

With a rapidly growing Chinese economy, Malaysia and China agreed to increase two-way trade to a significant level by 2010 and to strive for a more equitable balance of trade.

Malaysia also recognised China as a full market economy, and would continue to ensure that the business communities benefited from the various bilateral arrangements and programmes to be undertaken.

The United States has not recognised China as a full market economy even though a number of others, including New Zealand and Singapore, had done so.

According to some, recognising China as a market economy would deprive the United States and Europe of a "powerful weapon" for trade protectionism: anti-dumping threats on Chinese imports.

Abdullah extended an invitation to the Chinese leaders to visit Malaysia, which they have accepted.