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M'sia and Indonesia working to solve disputes

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**MERGAWATI
ZULFAKAR**
in Jakarta



JAKARTA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and Indonesian President Joko Widodo have instructed their special envoys tasked with resolving overlapping maritime claims to intensify their efforts.

The two leaders gave a fresh mandate to their special envoys to resolve the delimitation issue.

"We take note that there is a bit of progress reported by the two envoys but it is still too far from any comprehensive solution.

"We agree that the two envoys be given a fresh mandate to resolve the claims which can be accepted by both countries as soon as possible," Najib said in a joint press conference with Joko at the Presidential Palace here yesterday.

Najib is in Jakarta for the 11th leaders' annual consultation between Malaysia and Indonesia.

Both countries began talks in 2005 on maritime boundaries in the Sulawesi Sea, Singapore Strait and southern part of the Straits of Malacca following cases of encroachment, fishing and enforcement problems at the technical team level.

The technical team involving officials from Wisma Putra, Defence Ministry, Attorney-General's Chambers, National Security Council and Mapping Department have held 30 meetings with their Indonesian counterparts so far.

The Prime Minister decided to introduce a new mechanism to the border talks and



Meeting of minds: Najib (left) and Joko having a joint press conference for the 11th leaders' annual consultation between Malaysia and Indonesia.

appointed Tan Sri Mohd Radzi Rahman as the special envoy last year to accelerate the process of finding a solution.

The former Wisma Putra secretary-general has met Indonesia's presidential envoy Eddy Pratomo three times. It is understood that he will meet his Indonesian counterpart again by end of this month.

On the kidnapping cases of Indonesians and Malaysians in the Sulu Sea by militant Abu Sayyaf group, Najib said both leaders expressed concern and wanted a trilateral approach to stop the abductions.

Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines have agreed to tackle the problem by having joint patrols in the affected maritime area.

However, details of how the joint patrols

should be conducted are still being ironed out.

Najib felt that this could be done by following the template of the joint patrols conducted in the Straits of Malacca which saw a reduction of kidnappings by pirates.

"We believe this could be done by the three countries," he added. On bilateral trade, both leaders agreed the US\$30bil target could be achieved in the future.

Najib also thanked Joko's government for reducing government bureaucracy to make Indonesia more investor friendly.