

Colourful welcoming ceremony for PM

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medicine and pharmaceutical products for Islamic and Asean countries.

Earlier, Abdullah performed his Friday prayers at the Nan Xia Po Mosque, one of the oldest in China, at the Chaoyang district.

Later, Abdullah was accorded a colourful welcoming ceremony filled with pomp and splendour at the Great Hall of the People on a bright and breezy day.

The national anthems of both the countries were played before he inspected a 132-man guard of honour from the Chinese army, navy and air force, accompanied by a 19-gun salute.

He then held bilateral talks with his Chinese counterpart Wen Jiabao at the East Hall, before adjourning to

a banquet.

Before the start of the talks, Wen said he was honoured that Abdullah had chosen China for his first visit outside Asean, which he said demonstrated the value he attached to relations between the two countries.

"The anniversary of the 30 years of diplomatic ties will take place in a few days and your visit is of great significance to us," he said.

Wen recalled that before Abdullah assumed the premiership last year, he had visited China.

"We know each other. It is my great pleasure to meet you again," he said.

In response, Abdullah extended his appreciation for the hospitality accorded to his delegation.

"I am happy to be back here again. For most of us this is not our

first visit," he said, adding that he too was happy to meet Wen again.

He hoped that the meeting would pave the way to further extend the areas of co-operation between the two countries.

After the talks, Abdullah and Wen witnessed the signing of four MoUs between the governments and six MoUs and agreements involving the private sectors.

The government-to-government MoUs were on education in diplomacy and international relations, co-operation in the field of WTO agreement on technical barriers to trade, sanitary and phytosanitary and co-operation between the Chinese Association of Mayors and the Malaysia-China Business Council.

The private sector agreements were between China National

Electric Equipment Corp and The Group of Malaysian Companies on the 500Kv Missing Link project in Malaysia, joint venture agreement between China Bioway Biotech Group and Pati Herba Sdn Bhd to form a Research and Development Centre in the Biovalley, China International Television Corp and Astro All Asia Networks and the handover of a High-Energy X-ray Accelerator from Nutech Company Ltd to Universiti Teknologi Malaysia.

The MoUs were between China Worldbest Group and Phama Niaga related to pharmaceuticals; and China Film Group and Astro All Asia Networks.

The two leaders also exchanged commemorative stamps and first day covers by Pos Malaysia and China Post.

Abdullah: We want more Chinese tourists

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Multimedia Super Corridor hosted 12 companies, which were joint ventures between the two sides.

He said Malaysia was also a centre for quality education and that the number of Chinese students had jumped to 10,577 in 2003 from 4,691 in 2001.

Abdullah identified healthcare services, as the fourth area of co-operation, saying Chinese tourists should take advantage of their time in Malaysia to receive dental treatment, health screening, cosmetic surgery or visit health spas.

"We would like to welcome much more visitors from China," he said, adding that more than 350,000 Chinese tourists visited Malaysia in 2003.

He said franchise arrangements was another area where both sides could work together, noting that companies like Marry Brown Fried Chicken, Sugar Bun, Dave's Deli and England Optical had started franchising operations in China.