

Putting the brakes on transborder crime

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PUTRAJAYA: Malaysia and Vietnam have agreed to work more closely in tackling problems of transborder crime, particularly money-laundering and drug trafficking.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said both countries were also very keen to increase the existing good co-operation in areas of security.

Speaking to reporters after meeting his Vietnamese counterpart Phan Van Khai - who is on a three-day official visit - yesterday, Abdullah said both countries were very interested in exploring new areas of co-operation, particularly in trade, investment and the agro-based and bio-technology industries.

He said that in conjunction with Phan's visit, the two countries had also signed three agreements - on education, information technology and a joint declaration on comprehensive co-operation in the 21st century.

The agreements were signed at the Prime Minister's Department yesterday after Abdullah met Phan.

"We discussed a new air service agreement that will allow our national airlines to increase their flight frequencies and hope to sign this new agreement in the near future.

"We also discussed extensively about enhancing the co-



BETTER TIES: Abdullah (standing second from right) and Phan (second from left) watching Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar (right) and his Vietnamese counterpart Nguyen Dy Nien sign a memorandum to enhance bilateral ties.

operation between Petronas and Petro Vietnam in the exploration and distribution of petrochemical products in that country," he told reporters after the meeting.

Abdullah said he also informed Phan about Malaysia's plan to send a trade and investment mission to Vietnam in June to explore economic co-operation.

Asked if the overlapping claims on the disputed Spratly islands were discussed, Abdullah said he and Phan did not touch on the matter.

The Spratlys - a cluster of

dozens of islets, rocks and reefs in an area believed to be rich in oil and natural gas - are being claimed in whole or in part by China, Taiwan, the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam.