

Develop business links, Dr M urges Soviets

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From HARDEV KAUR: Moscow, July 30

SOVIET organisations have been urged to develop effective business links with the Malaysian private sector to enhance cooperation.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad gave an assurance tonight his Government would be "supportive of this process" in his speech at the state banquet in his honour hosted by the acting Soviet Prime Minister Mr V.S. Murkahovsky.

He said government arrangements can secure the foundations of cooperation. (Two new agreements on maritime arrangements and double taxation will be signed, providing further incentives for cooperation.)

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the major purpose of his visit to the Soviet Union was to consolidate links and discuss future cooperation.

He said as a non-nuclear nation, firmly committed to peace and disarmament, Malaysia welcomes the Soviet initiative on nuclear disarmament.

"We agree with you that the world must deal with the threat posed by nuclear confrontation and that new thinking and political courage are required to end the arms race," he said.

He hoped the Geneva talks will bear results soon "for the sake of mankind". Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir noted many other pressing issues could be easily resolved if the threat of nuclear war is lifted and goodwill prevails among nations.

"Just think of the enormous resources that it will free for the constructive development on nations and mankind," he said.

The Prime Minister outlined several areas where Malaysia and the Soviet Union share common perceptions. These include the need for disarma-

ment, the role of the United Nations and its associate agencies, the struggle in South Africa, the views on the situation in West Asia.

Welcoming the statement on Asian Pacific security by the General Secretary Mr Mikhail Gorbachev in Vladivostock last year Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said: "It was a timely reminder that the Soviet Union gave due prominence to its place and role in the Asia-Pacific community.

"We are encouraged to hear that the Soviet Union is prepared to work with the United States to terminate the arms race, to improve relations with China and Japan, to withdraw its troops from the territories of other countries and to enhance its relations with the other nations in the region, including Malaysia," he said.

Malaysia and other Asean members are very concerned with the prospects for peace, stability and regional cooperation in the Asia Pacific region. Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said efforts should initially be concentrated on the defusion of regional tensions caused by conflict situations that have led to the escalation of great power rivalry which polarise and divide the region:

Of immediate concern are the conflict situations in Kampuchea and Afghanistan. He said that Kampuchea has become a festering sore which "seriously inflicts the health of our region". Both Kampuchea and Afghanistan conflicts must be settled as soon as possible if the ideals of Vladivostock and Delhi are to be substantiated.

"We can never accept what has happened in Afghanistan, an independent and sovereign nation, as a fait accom-

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pli," he said, adding that Malaysia believed the principle of self-determination must be applied in Afghanistan.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the occupation of Kampuchea by a foreign power has breached an "important principle of international relations, creating a dangerous precedent".

He said Asean has worked hard to keep dialogue open with all interested parties so that

such a solution may be negotiated. "We believe that the Soviet Union's role in this process is critical."

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir believed the Asean summit in Manila at the end of the year will provide an opportunity for Asean leaders to review the results of their consultations with the Soviet Union and other interested parties.