

Regular leaders' meetings: PM Boosting ties with Soviets

MOSCOW, Fri. — Malaysia and the Soviet Union have agreed to upgrade their relations through frequent meetings between leaders of the two countries and more consultation on economic matters.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said economically there was much to be gained by Malaysia from this and politically it would contribute towards peace and stability in South-East Asia.

This was the outcome of the three days of meetings between the Malaysian delegation led by Dr Mahathir and members of the Soviet Council of Ministers led by acting Prime Minister Mr V.S. Murakhovsky.

This was endorsed by the two-hour, four-eyed meeting which Dr Mahathir had with Soviet Communist Party secretary-general Mr Mikhail Gorbachev at the Kremlin.

"Malaysia respects the Soviet views on change as expressed by Mr Gorbachev in his Vladivostok speech which

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he elaborated during the meeting, and the Soviets in turn respect our views on developments taking place in South-East Asia," the Prime Minister told the Malaysian Press today.

He repeated this in his conference with the foreign Press and his interview with Soviet television later in the day.

Dr Mahathir and Mr Gorbachev, in their meeting, agreed that countries should be free to decide and settle their own domestic problems and that they should settle international political problems through negotiations rather than through the use of force.

Dr Mahathir said in general Malaysia accepted and supported the Soviet view of maintaining peace in the Asia-Pacific region and Mr Gorbachev's double-zero option on medium and short-range missiles as both would help contribute to peace in South-East Asia.

This should help Asean's move for South-East Asia as a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality and turn it

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Soviet leader a pragmatist: Dr M

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into a nuclear-free zone. Dr Mahathir said Malaysia supported this as "we do not want nuclear weapons in our region."

"The weapons threaten mankind and the United States should support it."

He considered Mr Gorbachev as a pragmatist in the changes he was instituting in the Soviet Union and the changes he wanted to see in the world.

"We respect this as we too do not want to bogged down by old ways of doing things and solving problems," he said.

Beside disarmament, other matters discussed was Kampuchea and Afghanistan, the Iran-Iraq War and the global economy.

Dr Mahathir said some of the matters discussed would be also discussed between the other Asean leaders during

their summit meeting at the end of the year in Manila.

On trade between the two countries which was in Malaysia's favour, Dr Mahathir told the Soviets that rather than reduce the volume which now stands at \$600 million, it should be increased.

Malaysia agreed to redress the imbalance and several products to be purchased from the Soviet Union had been identified.

Dr Mahathir also brought up the question of the Antarctica with Mr Gorbachev and expressed his dissatisfaction with regard to the present regime.

The Soviet leader agreed that the Foreign Ministers of the two countries should meet again to discuss this further as the Soviets want to understand why Malaysia and some other countries had raised objections with regard to the agreement on Antarctica.