

KL worried over tariffs

By AHIRUDIN ATTAN

MALAYSIA laid its hopes yesterday that the developed countries in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (Gatt) adopt the necessary measures to bring down tariffs on tropical products to the lowest levels possible and to reduce farm subsidies that are detrimental to international agricultural trading.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysia, like other developing countries that depend on exports of primary commodities, is worried over tariff and non-tariff measures that defy the fundamentals of international trade.

At the dinner honouring visiting Italian Prime Minister Giovanni Gorla in Kuala Lumpur

last night, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said he believes Italy, one of the founders of the European Economic Community, can help impress upon the Community of the need for it to become more active in multilateral trade discussions that are aimed at creating more liberal trading in agriculture.

He said ties between Asean and the EEC so far are encouraging. "I am confident the Asean-EEC machinery that exists can contribute positively to help us realise our potentials and enhance cooperation at all levels for mutual benefit."

The Prime Minister also ticked off the superpowers for deliberately spoiling efforts to resolve problems in Afghanistan, Kampuchea, South Africa and West Asia for "some vested

interests." He said for these powers, the developing countries are no more than marionettes.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said although Malaysia's influence may be limited, it will continue to air its views at international forums to see that the principles of international relations are restored.

In this context, he added, Malaysia welcomes recent initiatives and developments concerning the Kampuchean issue and the US-Soviet arms reduction accord.

Earlier, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said he believes there are ample opportunities for Italy and Malaysia to improve bilateral ties, particularly in trade, investment and economic cooperation.

"These are areas where the private sectors of the two countries can play a vital role — by taking advantage of every opportunity that exists," he said.

The Prime Minister, in welcoming representatives from the Italian private sector who are travelling with their Prime Minister, called on them to follow up the discussions they have with their Malaysian counterparts during their stay here with "appropriate actions."

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir described the relationship between Malaysia and Italy as being "closer" during the past two decades. He said the close ties should be enhanced with more frequent visits by leaders of both nations.