

Rajiv backs PM on centre

NST - 7 SEP 1989

of excellence in South

From K. Bala

BELGRADE, Wed. — Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi has expressed support for a proposal by Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that a centre of educational excellence be set up in the South to reflect tangible co-operation among non-aligned countries

The Prime Minister suggested the idea to his Indian counterpart during their bilateral meeting yesterday at the Sava Centre. The venue of the ninth Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) meeting.

The bilateral meeting, one of the many Dr Mahathir is holding with his counterparts attending NAM, focused on what needs to be done to forge meaningful co-operation among South countries besides Malaysia-India relations

Dr Mahathir first mooted the idea of such a centre at the last NAM summit in Harare three years ago.

Pursuing the idea with Mr Gandhi, the two leaders agreed that the South concentrate on projects which can show tangible results for South co-operation.

They identified education as one area where this co-operation could be manifested.

In this context they agreed that one of the many fine higher institutions of learning in the Third World be selected as the centre of excellence.

Briefing newsmen after the meeting, Foreign Ministry Deputy Secretary-General Datuk Abdul Majid Mohamad said the proposed centre could arrest the flow of academicians to the North.

In fact those now in the North could be lured to return with Dr Mahathir

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pointing out that South Korea had been successful in doing so.

At present many students from the South pursue their higher education in developed countries, causing a drain on foreign exchange.

On bilateral matters, Datuk Majid said Mr Gandhi raised the question of trade balance which was now in Malaysia's favour due to exports of large quantities of palm oil to India.

To overcome this Dr Mahathir suggested that India use its expertise to market Malaysian palm oil to other countries.

It was a hectic day for Dr

Mahathir who was besieged with requests by Third World leaders to hold bilateral meetings. The Prime Minister today left for the historic city of Sarajevo, about 500km from here, which hosted the last Winter Olympics.

Besides Mr Gandhi, Dr Mahathir met Vietnamese President Vo Chi Cong, President of Bangladesh Hussein Muhammad Ershad, Commonwealth Secretary-General Sir Shridath Ramphal, Prime Minister of Malta Dr Edward Fenech Adami, Pan African Congress chairman Johnson P. Mlambo, President of Angola Jose Eduardo Santos, North Korean Premier Yon Hyong Mak and Sudanese President General Omar Hussain Ahmed El Bashir.

The call by Sir Shridath was related to final preparations for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Kuala Lumpur next month.

Mr Ershad told Dr Mahathir that his country would like to learn more about Malaysia's privatisation efforts.

Bangladesh would also like to send more of its officials to study the workings of Tabung Haji as Mr Ershad was not satisfied with

the report submitted by his officers sent earlier.

Dr Mahathir's meeting with his counterpart from Malta centred on the environment issue to be discussed at CHOGM in Kuala Lumpur and also at the summit now under way.

Malaysia has already submitted a draft paper on the matter.

The two leaders noted that any discussions on the environment must take into account the need to balance it with development.

They felt that developing countries must take the initiative in dealing with the question of environment instead of developed nations imposing their will on others for their own interests.

Malta offered to help Malaysia draft the environment declaration.

During his brief meeting with the Vietnamese President, Dr Mahathir discussed the Cambodian situation and the need to come to a comprehensive settlement.

Mr Vo Chi Cong also briefed the Prime Minister on the improving economic conditions in his country, to which Dr Mahathir replied that the Vietnamese people deserve a better life after decades of war