

# Fiji seeks advice on racial harmony

EST 27 NOV 1990

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — Fiji wants to learn from Malaysia the finer points of maintaining racial harmony in a multi-racial country.

Its Prime Minister Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara this morning had an informal discussion with Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on the subject for more than an hour.

Ratu Sir Kamisese is here on a six-day official visit on the invitation of the Prime Minister.

Foreign Ministry's deputy secretary-general Datuk Abdul Majid Mohamed told reporters that the two Prime Ministers exchanged views on how to enhance inter-racial harmony in a cosmopolitan country.

"Fiji has a similar multi-racial society like ours and they want to learn from us how to improve inter-racial ties.

"The Prime Minister explained the philosophy behind the steps taken to maintain peace and stability to ensure prosperity for the country."

He said Dr Mahathir related the Malaysian experience in multi-racial ties and the concept of co-

operation between parties within the Barisan Nasional coalition Government as well as the role of Umno.

Ratu Sir Kamisese expressed interest in studying the political organisation of Barisan Nasional, he said.

Describing the meeting as a cordial and informal exchange of views, Datuk Majid said Ratu Sir Kamisese was most interested in the Malaysian model of running a multi-racial country.

"Dr Mahathir informed him that racial harmony is achieved through maintaining law and order, discipline and a sense of belonging and involvement among all races.

"He also related the 1969 incident and how the different communities were made to realise that they will lose if the country was in trouble."

Ratu Sir Kamisese and Adi Lady Lala Mara were accorded an official welcome at Parliament Square this morning. They were received on arrival by Dr Mahathir and Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah and Deputy Prime Minister Ghafar Baba.

Datuk Majid said trade and investment matters were also brought up at the discussion and Fiji wanted to buy Malaysian crude oil. This was agreed to by Dr Mahathir and negotiations would begin soon.

Fiji which has been supplying sugar to Malaysia since 1975 and has just renewed a contract for supplies from 1992 to 1994. Fiji also promised to supply more sugar if required by Malaysia.

An air services agreement was later signed to provide for direct flights between Kuala Lumpur and Suva. Ratu Sir Kamisese signed for Fiji while Malaysia was represented by Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik.

Last night, Dr Mahathir suggested that Asean and South Pacific Forum countries go for "more practical projects" in regional co-operation especially those that will promote peace and prosperity.

Dr Mahathir made the suggestion at a dinner for Ratu Sir Kamisese and Adi Lady Lala here.

He said while bilateral co-operation was important, regional co-operation

should not be neglected.

"We welcome initiatives and efforts in establishing dialogue and co-operation between Asean and Forum countries.

"We are neighbours, a fact which many of us intellectually accept but very few are serious enough to take advantage of.

"At the moment, despite our proximity, there is a lack of substance in the relations between the two regional groupings.

"In initiating and promoting this interlocking network of co-operation between Asean and Forum countries, it would be more prudent to limit ourselves to the more practical projects that will contribute to peace and prosperity in our area."

Dr Mahathir noted that Fiji had made impressive strides economically and politically and the economic gains accruing from pragmatic policies of the interim Government headed by Ratu Sir Kamisese had restored stability to the country.

"You and I well know that in managing a multi-racial nation, a continuous balance has to be made in meeting the opposing de-

mands of our different communities.

"Despite the seemingly intractable problems that confront us, very unique opportunities are given to us to build a united nation whose people are proud to be its citizens."

He hoped that Malaysian businessmen would venture into Fiji especially with the "new opportunities" being offered now.

At the same time, he welcomed Fijian businessmen to explore opportunities available in Malaysia.

He reiterated Malaysia's commitment to the concept of economic and technical co-operation among developing countries.

He cited Malaysia's hosting of the Summit of the Group of 15 last June and the Malaysian Technical Co-operation Programme (MTCP) under which Malaysia shared its experience and expertise in development with other developing countries.

He was happy that training programmes offered under MTCP had been widely utilised by Fiji and he hoped that such training could be usefully adapted to the needs of the country.