

Dr M: We look forward to closer ties with Singapore

By Robert Goh

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — Malaysia looks forward to closer co-operation with Singapore regardless of which country benefited more from the relationship, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said co-operation between the two countries should be mutually beneficial but Malaysia was not going to make an evaluation of who would get more or who would get less from such co-operation.

"What is important for us is to get the maximum we can out of any co-operation.

"If by other people's estimation Singapore would get more, that is none of our business. We are not in-

terested in that and we won't be envious of what Singapore gets."

Dr Mahathir was speaking to reporters after paying a farewell call on Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, who had arrived on Friday with his wife and a 21-member delegation for a three-day official visit.

This was his first visit as Prime Minister since he took over from Mr Lee Kuan Yew late last year.

Dr Mahathir said he looked forward to working with Mr Goh, and welcomed his statement that he and his colleagues had no "emotional baggage" to carry, referring to the separation of the republic from Malaysia in 1965.

"Of course I get along

fine with Mr Lee also but there are some other people who still have memories of the past.

"But Mr Goh is not burdened by such problems, so I should imagine that it would be easier for us to work together."

On Singapore's support for Malaysia's proposal of an East Asian economic arrangement, he said:

"We welcome this. I am glad that Mr Goh completely understands this concept.

"There are now many protectionist barriers, and if we don't work together, we are going to get knocked down one by one."

Regarding Mr Goh's concept of a "crescent of prosperity" for the region covering South Korea, the

Chinese coast, Indochina and Asean in the next century, Dr Mahathir said:

"I think it is no different from what we have (in mind for the East Asian economic grouping). We agree almost 100 per cent with the concept of an East Asian economic grouping; one where we have common interests and where we can speak with one voice."

At a Press conference earlier, Mr Goh said that Dr Mahathir had briefed him on Thailand's proposal for a growth triangle in the south of the country, and that Malaysia saw prospects for co-operation

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Goh: We can have student exchange

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with Thailand in this project.

"It is up to Malaysia and Thailand to see how they might benefit from the project. If Malaysia sees benefits for herself in the project, proceed," he said.

"It may hurt Singapore, it may benefit Singapore. Whatever it is, Singapore will compete."

On his visit this morning to the Malaysian Agriculture Park in Shah Alam, Mr Goh said he had suggested to Agriculture Minister Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid and he was receptive to the proposal that if hostel facilities were available, Singapore could consider sending students there for their camping holidays.