

Dr M: M'SIA AND S'PORE WILL GAIN FROM TIES

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By Zulkifli Talib

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad foresees maximum benefits for both Singapore and Malaysia from the closer co-operation being forged between the two countries.

"A warm and closer co-operation based on trust will be to our mutual benefit. But we are not going to make any evaluation as to who will get more or less from it. What is important is that Malaysia gets the maximum out of this co-operation. We are not going to be envious if Singapore gets more," the Prime Minister said.

Dr Mahathir said he looked forward to working with his Singapore counterpart, Mr Goh Chok Tong, adding that the two countries could learn from each other.

Dr Mahathir was speaking to newsmen after bidding Mr Goh goodbye at Carcosa Seri Negara here.

Mr Goh, his wife and a 21-member delegation, left for home today after a three-day official visit.

Dr Mahathir also welcomed Mr Goh's assurance that Singapore would like to forget any "emotional experience" it had resulting from its separation with Malaysia.

"I welcome this. Of course, I get along well with Mr Lee (Kuan Yew) too. There are some people who have some memories of the past but Mr Goh is not burdened by

this," he said. "This should allow us to work well together."

Earlier, at a press conference, Mr Goh said relations between the two countries had improved in the last five years, thanks to the efforts of Dr Mahathir and Mr Lee.

He said the present Singapore leaders and officials, who mostly belonged to the post-independent generation, "have left behind the emotional baggage" of the separation.

Mr Goh said the leaders and people of the two countries should get to know one another better and learn from one another.

He added that he would encourage more Singa-

poreans to visit Malaysia to promote bilateral relations.

He suggested that hostels be built at the Bukit Chahaya Agricultural Park, which he visited this morning.

He said that with such facilities, Singapore would consider sending its students there for camping holidays which would enable them to learn more about the outdoor life.

In return, Mr Goh said, Malaysia could send its students to live in the urban environment of Singapore and learn some aspects of the Singaporean way of life.

On the East Asian economic grouping mooted by Dr Mahathir, he said

Singapore could be in the forefront to explain the idea.

He added that Dr Mahathir, with his international reputation, was the right person to spearhead the concept and get it accepted.

"It is a bold proposal. It may take time to materialise. But we believe it will benefit everyone in the long term," he said.

He said the proposed grouping would allow each member country to increase its strength when negotiating with others on common issues.

"Asean in itself may not have the same weight in international forum as an East Asian group. So we will try to expand Asean," he said.