

Dr M: More discussions on growth triangle needed

BATAM (Indonesia), Tues. — Malaysia needs to discuss with Singapore and Indonesia several issues relating to the setting up of an economic growth triangle, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said this must be done before any memorandum of understanding could be signed on developing the economic belt that straddled Batam, Singapore and Johor.

He said there were several areas, including laws of the three countries, that would have to be looked into.

"Another important aspect is that Singapore and Batam are free ports while Johor is a Customs-

duty area.

"We will have to resolve this and make provisions to avoid problems relating to trade between Johor and Singapore and Batam," he told newsmen after a day-long visit here.

He was accompanied by Finance Minister Datuk Paduka Daim Zainuddin, Tourism and Culture Minister Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik and Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Ahmad Sarji.

Singapore and Indonesia have already signed a memorandum of understanding to work jointly on tourism and industrial growth.

Singapore Prime Minister Datuk Goh Chok Tong, during his visit to Johor on Feb 4, had asked Johor

to sign one with the republic and study the possibilities of signing one with Indonesia.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was optimistic that all three areas would gain from the concept in terms of investment, tourism and industrial growth.

Meanwhile, an Indonesian spokesman said his government would send a delegation to Kuala Lumpur to discuss co-operation on the development of the triangle with a view of signing a memorandum.

He said the talks would be a continuation of the one between a team led by Foreign Ministry secretary-general Datuk Ahmad Kamil and Indonesian officials in Jakarta.