

Baker hopeful of an early Middle East peace conference

# US seeks Malaysia's help

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — US Secretary of State James Baker is hopeful a Middle East peace conference can be held before the end of the year and asks Malaysia to play a role.

He conveyed this optimism at a one-hour meeting here today with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Mr Baker, who arrived here at dawn to attend the annual dialogue with Asean, had asked Malaysia to use its close ties with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) to help in the peace process.

The US Secretary of State was on a five-nation Middle East tour to win support for a US initiative to convene the Arab-Israeli talks.

Foreign Ministry deputy secretary-general Datuk Abdul Halim Ali told reporters after the meeting that Mr Baker told the Prime Minister he was pleased with the support received from most Arab States for the initiative.

hathir for Malaysia's support of the UN resolutions that enabled the use of force to evict occupying Iraqi troops from Kuwait in the Gulf War.

According to Datuk Halim, Mr Baker said the US realised how difficult it was for Malaysia to have taken the position and added that it was highly appreciated by the United States.

Dr Mahathir explained to Mr Baker the objectives of the proposed East Asia Economic Group (EAEG) to allay the US fear that the grouping was intended to be an economic bloc.

Mr Baker had asked whether the EAEG would be GATT compatible to which the Prime Minister replied affirmatively. Both leaders agreed that exchange of views on the subject should continue between the two countries.

Official sources said Dr Mahathir also briefed Mr Baker on Malaysia's economy and steps taken by the

Dr Mahathir, explaining Malaysia's stand on the Middle East situation, said the Government appreciated Mr Baker's efforts, but maintained that Israel must be made to respect the various United Nations' resolutions.

Other Malaysian sources said the Prime Minister told Mr Baker Malaysia was concerned with the Israeli defiance of the UN resolutions asking it to stop Jewish resettlement in the occupied territories.

Dr Mahathir told Mr Baker it was incumbent upon the US to use its close relations with the Tel Aviv Government to get it to respect the UN resolutions.

Mr Baker thanked Dr Ma-

Government to preserve steady economic growth and racial harmony.

Reflecting the relaxed atmosphere of the meeting, Mr Baker was quoted as saying he wished the US could duplicate Malaysia's high growth rate. Mr Baker was also impressed with Malaysia's racial harmony.

Dr Mahathir told Mr Baker that Malaysia spoke loudly and decisively on certain international issues because it believed in them and did so in the spirit of democracy.

Mr Baker replied that the US understood and respected Malaysia's rights as the US itself sometimes spoke its mind.