

USSR wants \$540 million credit line

Malaysian aid for

to purchase palm oil

Soviets

From Balan Moses

NEW YORK, Tues. — Malaysia will allow the Soviet Union to purchase palm oil on credit following an urgent request for supplies, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

The Prime Minister said the Government would work towards providing as much palm oil as it could to the Soviet Union to be processed into food items.

The Soviet Union recently requested for a US\$200 million (M\$540 million) credit line to purchase Malaysian palm oil, he added.

"The request has been made and we have decided to do what we can to help them as it is important to provide aid to the Soviet Union at the moment," he told newsmen after visiting the newly completed US\$20 million New York Islamic Centre.

Dr Mahathir had earlier presented a cheque for US\$100,000 to the chairman of the centre's project development committee, Mohammad A. Abulhassan, as Malaysia's contribution to the centre.

He said other countries like Korea were also trying to help the Soviet Union in the wake of the abortive coup against President Mikhail Gorbachev.

Dr Mahathir was responding to a question on issues raised during a one-and-a-half-hour discussion with South Korean President Roh Tae Woo earlier in the morning.

"The countries are sending various food items to the Soviet Union. On our part, we are prepared to send our palm oil," he said.

On the discussion with President Roh, he said it centred on bilateral issues, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec), Asean's role in relation to Apec, the end of the Cold War and Korea's future development

programmes.

Dr Mahathir said President Roh concurred with the view that Asean's position and strength should be maintained despite recent interest by countries in the region in Apec.

"We agreed that efforts should be made to ensure Asean is not overwhelmed by Apec," he added.

On recent events in the Soviet Union, the Prime Minister said he was glad that it had led to the end of the Cold War.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir was met on arrival at the centre by Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Mr Abulhassan and the Imam of the centre, Dr Abdul Rahman Osman.

The Prime Minister toured the 85,000 square feet complex which will be opened soon. It will have a seating capacity of 1,500.

Dr Abdul Rahman said the centre was built largely with contributions from the Kuwaiti Government and the Emir of Kuwait.

He appreciated Malaysia's contribution which would go towards the construction of a library and administrative offices for staff.

"We are overwhelmed by the Malaysian Government's generosity in giving us financial assistance to improve the complex," Dr Abdul Rahman said.

He added that the Malaysian Government recently donated US\$30,000 for minor improvements to the centre.

Yesterday evening, Dr Mahathir and Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali attended a dinner hosted by the Malaysian Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Tan Sri Razali Ismail, at the permanent mission office.

Also present were 30 Wanita Umno representatives who are here to listen to Dr Mahathir's address at the United Nations General Assembly tomorrow.