

# KL to recognise other independent States

NSUBT 29 DEC 1991

## From Lim Thow Boon

ULSAN, Sat. — Prime Minister ~~Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said~~ Malaysia is likely to recognise soon the independent States, born from the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

"All we need to do is to take a decision," he told Malaysian newsmen accompanying him on a four-day private visit to South Korea last night.

He envisaged that the Malaysian ambassador in Moscow would represent the country in Russia and at the same time be accredited to the other independent States close to it.

"If it is possible, then Malaysia will later establish embassies in the other States," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who was responding to questions from the newsmen, did not foresee any major problem with regard to trade with the newly independent States although, he said, it was still unclear who would be responsible for the bilateral agreements Malaysia had signed with the Soviet Union.

His personal view was

that the situation was still murky and changing very fast.

He said changing a system of Government was not an easy task because while decisions could be made fast, the implementation of the decisions took time.

"In a democracy, people feel free to do what they want and in such a situation it can give rise to confusion," he added.

He noted that the countries in the "Commonwealth of Independent States" lacked capital and managerial expertise and in an open market economy, prices which were kept artificially low under the socialist system would rise.

This might cause difficulties to the people, and they would become impatient and disgruntled and might throw out their Government "as they have done with (Soviet leader Mikhail) Gorbachev".

Dr Mahathir said assistance from the West might not be enough because a lot of money would be required over a long period of time.

The Prime Minister, who had lunch with South Korean President Roh Tae Woo

in Seoul before flying here, said they discussed only briefly the events in the now defunct Soviet Union.

They talked generally about bilateral issues and the world political and economic situation.

Replying to another question, he said he did not raise the matter of the East Asia Economic Caucus with President Roh.

He made it clear that he did not come to South Korea or Japan — where he met Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa on Dec 24 — "to lobby" support for the EAEC.

However, he said he explained the concept to former Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone in Tokyo on Christmas day.

Mr Nakasone's reaction indicated he did not reject the EAEC.

Last night Dr Mahathir and Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah were guests of honour at a dinner to mark the naming and delivery of *Bunga Pelangi*, a Malaysian International Shipping Corporation carrier, in this city 400km south-east of Seoul (see also Page 2).

They return home tomorrow.