

# Dr M tells Ireland: Let's work together to keep markets open

By Vijayan Menon  
and Juhaidi  
Yean Abdullah

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — Malaysia and Ireland should work together and strive towards ensuring that trade markets remain open, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said this was important because the two countries, being small, were heavily dependent on trade.

"The importance of our co-operation must be seen

NSI 28 MAY 1998  
against the backdrop of huge markets with which our two countries are respectively connected. As small countries are heavily dependent on trade, we should work together to ensure that these markets remain open," he said.

Speaking at a dinner in honour of visiting Irish Prime Minister Albert Reynolds at Sri Perdana here, Dr Mahathir said regionalism had thrived in the uncertainties which clouded international trade. Reynolds arrived today for a four-day official visit.

He noted that the European Community, of which Ireland is a member, was in the process of implementing the Single European Market. Asean, on the other hand, would develop into an integrated market through the proposed Asean Free Trade Area (AFTA).

The Prime Minister stressed that there was nothing intrinsically wrong with this trend so long as open regionalism was practised. Open regionalism could contribute towards the goal of an open global trading system, he added.

In this respect, he said, the success of the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) was crucial as it would support this process. Dr Mahathir warned that its failure would encourage regional groupings to develop a fortress mentality.

On the East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC), Dr Mahathir said the main objective for its formation was to allow the dynamic East Asian economies a greater

□ PLEASE TURN TO  
PAGE 2, COL 5

# PM: East Asian views significant

NSF 28 MAY 1993

□ FROM PAGE ONE

say in multilateral trade negotiations and decision-making, which at the moment the individual states did not have.

As a loose consultative forum, he said, the EAEC would allow East Asian countries to speak with one voice in their common interest, that is, to ensure that international trade remained unfettered.

"The forum will also allow greater co-ordination between the East Asian states where mutual help in the form of cross-investments has stimulated growth."

Dr Mahathir noted that intra-regional trade in East Asia had reached a remarkable level of 42 per cent of the region's total trade. This further reflected the significant free flow of capital between the East Asian economies which has stoked regional dynamism.

This was achieved despite the lack of formal arrangements between the East Asian countries, he added.

"If the achievements of the East Asian nations are anything to go by, their views on world trade and economic development must be worth listening to and respected.

"Effectively, silencing them by dividing them into ineffective non-entities helps no one. As Ireland gained by being with the other European countries, we hope that we will not be denied the same benefit of a collective voice."

On bilateral relations, Dr Mahathir noted that contacts between the two countries had noticeably increased, especially between the private sectors, since his visit to Ireland last September.

With the reciprocal visit by his Irish counterpart, Dr Mahathir said both countries should now build on the momentum in order to maximise the results of the exchange of visits.

"As our countries have open economies, the growing interaction between our entrepreneurs bodes well for the rapid development of trade and investment between Ireland and Malaysia. We in the Government must be fully supportive of this."

He added that both countries should know the other's potential better. In particular, he said, bilateral co-operation should focus on the services sector. Since Ireland had made much progress, it could contribute to Malaysia's own development in this sector. Both countries could also work together to take advantage of opportunities in this area in third countries, he added.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was also interested to learn from Ireland which had developed sophisticated linkages between its research and development and the universities and the manufacturing sector.

He also suggested that Ireland use Malaysia as the base for its specialised services to penetrate into this region.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said both countries would step up bilateral economic co-operation and increase the existing understanding both countries had in the field of education.

He said Irish investments here were minimal and the balance of trade was in Malaysia's favour. Total trade between the two countries in 1991 was about RM250 million, an increase of about 17 per cent from the previous year.

At a Press conference at the Prime Minister's Department, he said both Prime Ministers had fruitful discussions, adding that the decisions, taken by them would pave the way for greater development and economic co-operation.

Abdullah said besides registering a greater volume of trade, it was also decided that there should be co-operation in the field of aviation and tourism. He said existing co-operation in the field of education would also be enhanced by having twinning programmes between the higher institutions of learning in Malaysia and Ireland.

"Ireland has for long provided medical education for Malaysian students. They have agreed to extend this to business, management and other professional courses."

Abdullah said Irish businessmen would be encouraged to relocate their industries here to take advantage of the cheap labour while Malaysian businessmen could establish factories in Ireland so that the products would have access to European Community markets.

Efforts would also be made to promote Malaysia among the Irish and capitalise on the strong Irish pound which would make the country a cheap destination.

Abdullah also said Dr Mahathir hoped Ireland would import more Proton Saga cars as only a few had been marketed there due to the EC quota.

"They have agreed to solve this problem to enable more of the national car to be imported as Ireland does not produce its own automobiles."

He said Dr Mahathir had also voiced his regret over the European countries' in-

ability to solve the Bosnian conflict.

"Dr Mahathir made it clear that Malaysia's urgency in wanting an end to the conflict is not because Muslims are the victims but that the country has always condemned oppression such as the Pol Pot's regime in Cambodia or apartheid."

Abdullah said Reynolds had given the assurance that he would bring Dr Mahathir's views on the matter to the attention of his European counterparts.

Reynolds, accompanied by his wife, Emer and son Albert Reynolds Jr, is leading a 51-member delegation, which includes businessmen and corporate leaders.

Also in the delegation were Minister of Trade and Tourism Charles McCreavy, head of the International Division in the Prime Minister's Office Walter Kirwan and Irish Trade Board chief executive Alan McCarthy.

Earlier, Reynolds, accompanied by Abdullah, was welcomed by Dr Mahathir at Parliament Square.

The minister in attendance is Deputy Health Minister Datuk Mohamed Farid Ariffin.

At the Square, Reynolds inspected a guard-of-honour comprising three officers and 103 other ranks from the 1st battalion of the Royal Malay Regiment, under the command of Mejar Noozrin Mohamed Noor.

Dr Mahathir then introduced Cabinet Ministers, senior Government leaders and foreign dignitaries who attended the function to Reynolds.

The Irish Prime Minister then proceeded to Carcosa Seri Negara, after which he was granted an audience with the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Azlan Shah at the Istana Negara.