

Barriers must go, says Dr M

21 AUG 1993

Dr. M. *Quenter*
says Dr M *fr. ps.*

By CHOI TUCK WO
and LEANNE GOH

BANGKOK: Malaysia's recipe for economic success in Asean will be for member countries to jointly bring down tariff barriers and develop their resource-based industries.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday the member countries should also push for stronger growth on the back of the buoyant economic environment.

He said Asean countries should open their markets and allow access to one another's goods to promote a healthier development of their economies.

While Asean pursued efforts towards greater liberalisation of free trade to ensure markets of the rich North remained open, countries within the region and the South should also open their markets.

"Liberalisation will remove market inefficiencies, promote greater economic activities and ultimately bring growth and development to our economies.

"It is for this reason that we should strive for greater economic co-operation by first liberalising our own economies," he said when addressing members of the Joint Standing Committee on Commerce, Industry and Banking (JSCCIB) of Thailand at the Oriental Hotel.

Dr Mahathir noted the recent implementation of the Common Effective Preferential Tariff by Asean to create an Asean Free Trade Area by 2008 should provide Thai and Malaysian businessmen the extra impetus to venture into new areas.

"Towards this end, I hope all Asean members would undertake an accelerated programme of across-the-board tariff cuts to make the Asean region an even more competitive and truly free market where numerous opportunities prevail," he said.

Dr Mahathir said within the context of these developments, Thailand and Malaysia could comple-

PM sees great potential

● FROM PAGE ONE
ment each other in their quest for greater economic growth and prosperity.

"We both have strong and vibrant economies. Our people have a penchant for hard work and are endowed with the necessary skills.

"Both countries enjoy high growth rates and have seen a transformation of their economic sectors from the production of commodities to the production and export of manufactured goods," he said.

Given the above factors, there are certainly opportunities for Thai and Malaysian businessmen to jointly participate in industrial and other economically feasible ventures for mutual benefit.

"Together, Thailand and Malaysia can scale greater economic heights by taking that great step forward by investing in joint industrial projects and other businesses," he added.

Dr Mahathir noted that of the 61 Thai investment projects approved in Malaysia since 1980, involving Thai equity of US\$29.5 million and total investments of US\$82 million, about 40 projects are already operational.

He described the investments as low and could be further increased given the closeness of the two countries and possibilities for project complementation.

● TURN TO PAGE 2