

# Malaysia keen on car venture with India, says Mahathir

By WONG CHUN WAI 2

NEW DELHI: Malaysia is keen to have a joint venture with India in its car industry.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said India already had joint ventures with Japan, Italy, France and possibly Germany in the industry.

Speaking at a dialogue with Indian businessmen at the Pragati Maidan complex here yesterday, Dr Mahathir also said Malaysia would like to market its national car in India.

Indian Commerce Minister Pranab Mukherjee was also present to answer questions from Malaysian businessmen at the dialogue organised by the Confederation of Indian Chambers and Industries.

Dr Mahathir told the businessmen that 71 per cent of its exports were in manufacturing. "Since 1969, trade between Malaysia and the South has increased by 400 per cent," he added.

He also said Malaysia had been in the forefront in promoting South-South relations.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir visited the Group of 15 trade exhibition held at the same venue.

He also held an informal discussion with his Indian counterpart, N.V. Narasimha Rao and Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe, who is also here for bilateral consultations.

Today, Dr Mahathir will meet Mugabe for bilateral talks. The two are the only G15 heads of government who had turned up despite the postponement of the summit for lack of quorum.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said five memorandums of understanding (MOUs) for various undertakings between

Malaysian and Indian businessmen will be signed today.

Land and General Bhd and India's Ircon will seal an agreement involving the construction and operation of railway, including light rail services, in Malaysia.

Telekom Malaysia Bhd and Usha Martin Industries will work out a joint venture on the supply of telephone equipment in India.

Uniphone Corporation Bhd and Kerala State Industrial Development will work out the manufacturing of heat resisting latex here.

Rubfield and Rubfila will sign the MOU involving technical assistance development.

The Cisco Group and Kasturba Medical College is striking a deal for a twinning programme for medical degrees.

Owner Datuk Dr K.S. Nijar said subject to approvals from both sides, he hoped the programme would get off the ground by next year.

The programme involves allowing Malaysian students to study in Kuala Lumpur after an initial two years' study in India.

He said Dr Mahathir would also visit the Maruti national car plant at Gurgaon.

Malaysia is interested in India's chemical and pharmaceutical sectors while India is keen on Malaysia's engineering, electronic and auto industry fronts.

Abdullah said Dr Mahathir would also meet Malaysian students including several who had lost their places at the Manipal medical college following a court ruling on quotas for foreign students.

The Foreign Minister met some of the affected students on Sunday to help resolve their plight.