

Dr Mahathir welcomes China's commitment to preserve peace

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysia welcomed China's commitment to help preserve peace in the Asian region, saying that it was vital to economic progress and efforts to raise everyone's living standards.

The Prime Minister said that as a big nation with the highest population in the region, China had expressed its commitment to establish peace and not to interfere with other countries' affairs.

He said Malaysia also did not agree with the view that China should be considered Malaysia's potential enemy.

Dr Mahathir was speaking at a dinner hosted by the Malaysia-China Friendship Association to entertain Chinese president Jiang Ze-

min at the Crown Princess Hotel here tonight.

"Just like China, we believe neighbouring countries need to overcome problems through consultation," he said, adding that in this era confrontation would not benefit anyone.

If this fails, then both parties could agree to take their disputes to the World Court for arbitration.

The Prime Minister said he expected that China would definitely emerge as a developed nation and be influential in international affairs.

"This may possibly materialise in the first quarter of the next century when our new generation becomes adults," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the China-Malaysia Friendship As-

sociation had also been established in China and it was the aim of the two associations to promote more two-way visits for the purpose of tourism, business or cultural activities between people of the two countries.

In this respect, he said Malaysia encouraged airlines of the two countries to initiate efforts to cover more destinations within the two countries.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia would also continue to enhance co-operation with China in scientific research, technology transfer and cultural programmes.

He said wider co-operation would also be established in the exchange of information while co-operation in sports training would continue.

He said he had full confidence that relations between Malaysia and China would become stronger in the future.

In his speech, Jiang said relations between China and Malaysia had progressed rapidly over the past 20 years in the various fields and would continue to be enhanced.

He said the existing Sino-Malaysian relations did not come by easily but was the result of concerted efforts by the Governments and peoples of the two countries.

He said a lasting Sino-Malaysian friendship would not only benefit the two countries and the people but would ensure peace, stability, prosperity and development in the region.

Jiang also said that bilat-

eral trade had maintained a two-digit growth for six successive years and the trade volume for the first seven months of this year reached US\$1.339 billion (RM 3.35 billion).

This, he added was an increase of 85.9 per cent over the corresponding period last year, and a higher growth rate than China's trade with any other Asean country.

Jiang said there was vast potential for closer Sino-Malaysian economic co-operation as the two economies, each with its own advantages, are highly complementary.

Also present was chairman of the Malaysia-China Friendship Association Datuk Usman Awang.