

Let's always remain friends, says Dr Mahathir

By Gerald Raja

SINGAPORE, Sat — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad wants relations between Malaysia and Singapore to always remain cordial and on the best of terms.

He said the two countries should continue to get along with each other, in the same manner as displayed by Malaysian and Singaporean members of the Singapore Medical Alumni Association.

Dr Mahathir said: "We hope our two countries, which are neighbours, can get along the way members of the alumni get along.

"Fortunately, for us, we (Malaysia and Singapore) are not a very quarrelsome lot.

"You must remember that in other countries, people are not so driven to peaceful approaches in solving prob-

lems ... but here (association), we would like to be friends, and will continue our friendship, long after leaving the university."

The Prime Minister was speaking at the Singapore Medical Alumni Association's 72nd reunion dinner which was held at the ballroom of the Westin Stamford here last night, where he was the guest of honour.

The association comprises ex-members of the King Edward VII College of Medicine and the Faculties of Medicine, universities of Malaya and Singapore.

Also present were Dr Mahathir's wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, two prominent Malaysian alumni, Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik, and Sarawak Deputy Chief Minister Tan Sri Amar Dr Wong Soon Kai, who is also Minister for Infrastructure Development and Tourism for the State, and associa-

tion president Prof Arthur Lim.

Dr Mahathir's speech was impromptu, but nevertheless, the Prime Minister was certainly in his element.

Perhaps, it was a side of Dr Mahathir which few Singaporeans knew — that apart from being an astute politician, he could be equally at home, in a lighter vein, as well.

Humour seemed to be the order of Dr Mahathir's "off-the-cuff" speech as almost everything he spoke of was spiced with humour, and the guests enjoyed every minute of it.

As he recalled the days as a medical student at the University of Malaya in Singapore in 1952, the Prime Minister held the guests in stitches with his witty comments and remarks.

At one stage, Dr Mahathir even "admitted" to the guests that he was "not very good at this kind of (im-

promptu) speeches" but, in the same breath, told them he wished they were his voters (so that it would enable him to make a better speech).

Dr Mahathir later received a souvenir, which was a leather-bound book containing comments on the Prime Minister, by members of the association's alumni, from Lim, the association's president.

Earlier, Dr Siti Hasmah conferred the association's honorary membership on Dr Ling and Dr Wong, and two Singaporean alumni, Dr Oon Chiew Seng and Tan Sri Dr Tay Teck Eng.

Dr Oon is a past president of the Alumni Association, and is currently setting up the first Home for Senile Dementia in Singapore, while Dr Tay, who was also the association's past president, is the chairman of the Singapore Cancer Society.