

28/02/1997

Malaysia, Thailand to enhance ties

K.P. Waran; Satwant Singh

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Friendship and the neighbourliness spirit between Malaysia and Thailand have resulted in strong cross-border co-operation but they can be enhanced.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his Thai counterpart General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh echoed that the depth of mutual understanding and trust between both countries had significantly contributed to peace and co-operation in the region and that they should join hands to help other neighbouring countries.

In their respective speeches at a dinner hosted by Dr Mahathir for Chavalit at Seri Perdana, they called for the enhancement of relations and closer co-operation between the two countries.

Dr Mahathir said it was no secret that Malaysia and Thailand were close friends and neighbours in the true spirit of Asean and relations had progressed amicably over the years.

He said being neighbours and sharing common borders, it was inevitable that there would be friction every now and then in the bilateral relationship.

"However, I am happy to note that through the years, certain useful bilateral mechanisms like the annual Joint Commission Meetings and the General Border Committee have managed to overcome problems or kept them at a low level - the subjects of negotiations rather than confrontation.

"Malaysia and Thailand are not big nations but we have shown the commitment and courage to participate and contribute positively in various multilateral organisations.

"We will be that much more effective when we work in concert, as for example through Asean," he said.

Dr Mahathir also touched on Malaysia's position on the subject of illegal immigrants.

"Malaysia needs foreign workers but their entry and presence must be in accordance with established procedures as well as Malaysia's laws and regulations," he said.

Therefore, he said, Malaysia highly appreciated the co-operation extended by neighbours such as Thailand to curb the entry of illegal immigrants into Malaysia.

Chavalit called on both countries to work together as close and effective neighbours in order to achieve common goals and aspirations.

"Time has proven that with the spirit of friendship and good neighbourliness, we can address issues in a positive manner to the mutual satisfaction and benefit of both countries," he said.

Citing the successful co-operation regarding domestic insurgencies, he expressed confidence that both countries would continue to promote co-operation and move from strength to strength in bilateral relationship.

He said Southeast Asia, through its openness and transparency, had achieved a level of peace and stability unmatched in its recent history.

"We have the opportunity to shape our future with our own hands given the human resources and the assets that we possess.

"We must join hands as well as extend them to assist other countries in the region. Only then will we be able to realise a prosperous, stable and vibrant Asean comprising all 10 Southeast Asian countries," he said.

Chavalit said there was a need to maintain a positive trend of promoting balanced growth and development for the benefit of all the 10 countries in

the region.

He said the coming informal Asean Summit in Kuala Lumpur would be a timely opportunity to discuss future co-operation and accelerate the pace of regional progress.

"This includes the development of a trans-Asian transportation network which is one of your many significant regional initiatives," he said.

In this connection, he said, Thailand stood ready to act as a bridge between Asean and other countries in mainland Southeast Asia.

(END)