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Ready to host China-Taiwan talks

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Malaysia is willing to play host to a summit between China and Taiwan, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said in an interview televised today.

"We have no problem with that. We would like to play our role if we are wanted. Even if Malaysia is not selected, we would still support a negotiation," Dr Mahathir said.

In the TVBS Asia interview taped in Putrajaya in the middle of last month, anchorwoman Grace Chen asked Dr Mahathir about his offer several years ago for Kuala Lumpur to be the venue for a summit and if the offer still stood.

Chen also mentioned to Dr Mahathir that during the financial turmoil he had described the relationship between Malaysia and Taiwan as "a friend in need is a friend indeed" and asked how he would see relations now.

"It is still friendly. We have good relations with Taiwan's leaders. The status has not changed.

"We still cannot recognise Taiwan as an independent country. We still believe in the one China policy but we do not find this an obstruction to friendly relations," he said.

Chen also asked if Malaysia would issue a transit visa to Chen Shui-bian if he applied for one, to which Dr Mahathir replied it would not be a problem if the Taiwanese president was passing through.

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