

# East Timor's independence welcomed

Nst 2 0 MAY 2002

SHAH ALAM, Sun. — Malaysia welcomes the independence of East Timor and wished the country well, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

“We are very happy for East Timor, which celebrates its independence tomorrow,” he told reporters after opening the 56th MIC annual general meeting here.

Dr Mahathir regretted that he was unable to attend East Timor's independence celebrations as he

had to leave for Japan tomorrow.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar would represent Malaysia in Dili.

Asked whether East Timor would join Asean, Dr Mahathir said: “Malaysia very much welcomes East Timor into Asean.”

In a statement, the Foreign Ministry said Malaysia and East Timor would have diplomatic relations from tomorrow to develop friendly ties.

On the same day, the Malaysian liaison office in Dili will be upgraded to the Embassy of Malaysia.

East Timor will establish its diplomatic mission in Malaysia “at an appropriate time in the future”.

The statement said diplomatic relations were based on mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

East Timor, a tiny territory of 750,000 people, will become the world's 192nd independent nation.