

Sarji: Economic diplomacy our aim

By G. Danapal

PETALING JAYA, Thurs. — Malaysia is placing more emphasis on economic diplomacy now because it is an essential tool for national development, the Chief Secretary to the Government, Tan Sri Ahmad Sarji Abdul Hamid, said today.

To help the country excel in this, diplomatic officers must receive training and acquire skills in international economics and trading laws, he said.

This is because developing key sectors such as external trade, foreign investment and tourism depends a great deal on diplomatic officers' efforts in securing the assistance and co-operation of friendly countries and making more friends for the nation.

"Economic diplomacy requires strategic thinking where the officers have to think of ways to create a demand for their country's products and services."

Ahmad Sarji was closing a three-month diplomacy training course for Foreign Service officers of the Central Asian republics at the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations here.

Nineteen officers in the diplomatic service from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan,



Ahmad Sarji (left) having a word with Myrza-baeva Toktahanovna and Uluzbek Kasoulov (middle), participants from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan respectively.

Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (newly-independent Central Asian states) attended the course, the first to be held by the institute for foreigners.

Ahmad Sarji, who also presented certificates to the

participants, said contemporary relations among nations had grown increasingly complex due to the rapid advances in the field of communication technology and the fast-changing global environment.

"Under the circumstances, securing co-operation among nations is the ideal objective of diplomacy achievable through bilateral and multilateral contacts."

He said the newly-independent Central Asian republics, emerging from the shadow of the Cold War, had begun their search for a place in the world community.

Apart from strengthening and consolidating their domestic polices, they will need friends around the world to help in the nation-building process.

He hoped the participants would continue to maintain useful contacts with Russia and other former states of the Soviet Union for historical reasons.

"This will help widen your diplomatic horizons and also bring you into contact with new regions and new countries, like Malaysia, with whom mutually beneficial relations can be forged."

He was confident they had acquired a certain level of awareness of the potential in this region.

The institute will hold two similar courses for newly-independent African States and Herzegovina-Bosnia in April and July.