

## Find markets, diplomats told

By SHAHANAAZ SHER HABIB

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysian diplomats should help the private sector to find markets for local products, Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Ahmad Sarji Abdul Hamid said yesterday.

He said diplomacy and international relations had in recent years undergone tremendous change where emphasis was no longer on protocol, political and security matters but rather on economic matters.

Political alliances such as Nato and the Warsaw Pact were less mentioned in the media as compared to economic alliances such as G7, G15, North-South, South-South Co-operation, Nafta, Apec and EAEC, he said.

"All this reflects a change from ideological and political strife to economic competition," he said, adding diplomats had a role to play in the economic arena.

"As exporters are unable to travel all over the world to find markets, diplomats should be their representatives and find markets for Malaysian products," he said.

Ahmad Sarji was speaking at the closing of a four-month course for administrative and diplomatic officers (PTD) at the Institute for Diplomatic and Foreign Relations.

His speech was read by Datuk Abdul Halim Datuk Abdul Rauf, director-general of the Implementation Co-ordination Unit in the PM's Department.

Ahmad Sarji said at present,

trade barriers and the flow of capital, directly or indirectly, determined the status or value of relations among countries.

He also said diplomats through "networking" could help bring more foreign capital into the country.

"As diplomats have direct contact with foreign investors, they can play an effective role in attracting investments," he said.

Diplomats, he said, should also defend the country's policies abroad, especially on human rights and environment issues.

He said they should also take note of the leadership's emphasis on markets in developing countries such as Latin America, South Africa, Central Asia and the Pacific.