

MAHATHIR

PETALING JAYA, JAN. 15 (BERNAMA) -- SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRIES HAVE BEEN URGED TO MAXIMISE THE EFFECT OF REGIONAL COOPERATION AND TO EXPLOIT FULLY THE ABUNDANT RESOURCES OF OPPORTUNITIES THAT EXIST IN THE REGION TO MEET THE CHALLENGE OF REGIONAL COOPERATION.

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID THE NEED FOR REGIONAL SOLIDARITY WAS NOW MORE URGENT THAN BEFORE AS THE CHASM BETWEEN THE DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING NATIONS WIDEN AS THE POPULATIONS GREW AND AS THE COUNTRIES CONTINUED TO FACE AN UNCERTAIN WORLD ECONOMY.

OPENING THE SOUTHEAST ASIA CENTRAL BANKS (SEACEN) RESEARCH AND TRAINING CENTRE HERE TODAY, DR. MAHATHIR SAID THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CENTRE WAS CONSISTENT WITH CURRENT POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS IN THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN REGION.

+IT IS A CONCRETE EXPRESSION OF THE PRACTICAL NATURE OF THE CLOSE ASSOCIATION THAT EXISTS AMONG THE CENTRAL BANKS AND THE MONETARY AUTHORITIES IN THE REGION,+ HE ADDED. -- BERNAMA MORE 1807/LK

MAHATHIR 2 PETALING JAYA

IT WAS ALSO AN EXPRESSION OF THE OPPORTUNITY THAT HAD BEEN TAKEN, AND THE OBLIGATION THAT HAD BEEN ACCEPTED, BY COUNTRIES OF THE REGION TO PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE IN DETERMINING THEIR DESTINY.

IT WAS A MEASURE OF SELF-HELP AND COOPERATION AMONG NATIONS WHICH WERE HETEROGENEOUS IN SIZE, POPULATION, PROBLEMS AND ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT.

THE CENTRE'S PRIMARY OBJECTIVE WAS TO STIMULATE AND FACILITATE COOPERATION AMONG THE CENTRAL BANKS AND MONETARY AUTHORITIES IN THE REGION AND TO PROMOTE A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF FINANCIAL, MONETARY, BANKING AND DEVELOPMENT MATTERS OF INTEREST TO THE MEMBERS COUNTRIES AND TO THE REGION AS A WHOLE.

DR. MAHATHIR SAID ALMOST ALL THE COUNTRIES IN THE REGION WERE FACED WITH PROBLEMS OF OVER-POPULATION, UNDER-NOURISHMENT, UNEMPLOYMENT AND UNDER-EMPLOYMENT AND OTHER RELATED PROBLEMS.

THE SETTING UP OF THE CENTRE WITH A RESEARCH PROGRAMME ORIENTED TOWARDS PRACTICAL RESULT WAS NOT ONLY TIMELY, BUT ALSO HIGHLY RELEVANT, HE SAID. -- BERNAMA MORE 1812/LK

MAHATHIR 3 PETALING JAYA

THE CENTRE WOULD HAVE A KEY ROLE IN AVOIDING DUPLICATION OF EFFORTS BY THE SEACEN COUNTRIES IN FINDING SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS OF COMMON CONCERN, ESPECIALLY IF EXPERIENCES OF SEACEN COUNTRIES COULD BE BROUGHT TO BEAR ON THE CONCLUSIONS OBTAINED FROM ITS RESEARCH ACTIVITIES.

EMPHASIS WOULD BE GIVEN BY THE CENTRE TO THE AVAILABILITY OF QUALIFIED AND SKILLED PERSONNEL AMONG THE COUNTRIES, HE SAID.

TRAINED PERSONNEL WERE NEEDED IN ALMOST EVERY COUNTRY IN THE REGION AND IT WAS THEREFORE APPROPRIATE THAT THE CENTRE WOULD ACCORD IMPORTANCE TO ITS TRAINING ACTIVITY.

+I HOPE THE TRAINING PROGRAMME WILL ALSO ENCOURAGE THE EXCHANGE OF MANPOWER BETWEEN THE SEACEN CENTRAL BANKS, FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES.+ -- BERNAMA MORE 1816/LK

MAHATHIR 4 PETALING JAYA

EARLIER, BANK NEGARA GOVERNOR TAN SRI ISMAIL ALI SAID THE CENTRE WOULD CONCENTRATE ON RESEARCH PERTAINING TO PRACTICAL MATTERS AND THOSE OF INTEREST TO THE REGION.

IT WAS AGREED TO BY THE GOVERNORS THAT THE CENTRE'S FIRST PROJECT WAS THE COMPILING AND EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION AND DATA CONCERNING UNEMPLOYMENT IN SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRIES.

HE SAID THE NEED FOR TRAINING OF CENTRAL BANKS AND MONETARY AUTHORITIES IN THE REGION WAS PRESSING AND COURSES WOULD BE CONDUCTED FROM TIME TO TIME. -- BERNAMA 1821/LK