

MAHATHIR
FROM ZAINOOR SULAIMAN

JAKARTA, FEB. 26 (BERNAMA)—ASEAN COUNTRIES HAVE ALWAYS ACCORDED HIGH PRIORITY TO THE CREATION OF VIABLE AND EFFECTIVE INFRASTRUCTURE FACILITIES AS A PRE-REQUISITE NOT ONLY TO IMPROVE THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF THE PEOPLE WITHIN THE REGION BUT ALSO TO DEVELOP CLOSE RELATIONS WITH COUNTRIES OUTSIDE THE REGION, DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TODAY.

ASEAN COUNTRIES, BEING MAJOR PRODUCERS OF SOME OF THE WORLD'S ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES SUCH AS RUBBER, TIN, VEGETABLE OIL, SUGAR, RICE AND SOON PERTOLEUM, HAD TO RELY ON EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS DOMESTICALLY AS WELL AS INTERNATIONALLY, HE ADDED.

"THESE FACILITIES MAY NOT BE MODERN OR UP-TO-DATE BY EUROPEAN STANDARDS, BUT THEY SERVE TO HELP IN THE SMOOTH FLOW OF GOODS FROM VILLAGE TO MARKET, MARKET TO CITY, CITY TO PORT AND PORT TO INTERNATIONAL MARKET," HE TOLD ABOUT 900 DELEGATIONS ATTENDING THE SECOND ASEAN-EEC CONFERENCE ON INDUSTRIAL COOPERATION AT JAKARTA CONVENTION HALL, HERE.

SPEAKING ON "INFRASTRUCTURE FACILITIES IN ASEAN REGION," DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR, WHO IS LEADING THE 88-MEMBER MALAYSIAN DELEGATION, SAID ASEAN ECONOMIC MINISTERS HAD GIVEN HIGH PRIORITY ON INFRASTRUCTURAL PROJECTS THAT CONSOLIDATED AND ACCELERATED TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM TO COMPLEMENT STRENGTHEN ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL COOPERATION IN THE ASEAN REGION.

TO THIS END, A NUMBER OF THESE REGIONAL PROJECTS WERE EITHER IN THE PROCESS OF PLANNING OR BEING IMPLEMENTED, HE SAID.

—BERNAMA MORE HM 1211

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DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT AT PRESENT BOTH INTRA AND EXTRA REGIONAL COOPERATION WERE ADEQUATELY PROVIDED FOR BY THE EXISTING TERRESTRIAL, RADIO LINKS AND SUBMARINE CABLES ESTABLISHED BETWEEN MEMBER COUNTRIES ON A BILTERAL BASIS, SUPPLEMENTED BY SATELLITE COMMUNICATIONS SET-UP BY THE COUNTRIES INDIVIDUALLY, IN ASSOCIATION WITH MULTI-NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS CORPORATIONS.

TO COPE WITH THE GROWTH OF TRAFFIC CAPACITY IN THE FUTURE, THE ASEAN SUBMARINE CABLE SYSTEM HAD BEEN LAUNCHED TO LINK ALL THE FIVE COUNTRIES.

THE FIRST SEGMENT BETWEEN THE PHILIPINES AND SINGAPORE WAS COMMISSIONED LAST AUGUST WHILE THE WHOLE PROJECT PROVIDING A CAPACITY OF 1,380 CIRCUITS WAS EXPECTED TO BE COMPLETED BY 1983.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR, WHO IS ALSO TRADE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER, SAID THAT ASEAN HAD ALSO ADOPTED AS A LONG TERM OBJECTIVE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A REGIONAL SATELITE COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM. FOR THIS PURPOSE INDONESIA HAD OFFERED HER PALAPA SATELLITE SYSTEM.

THE PHILIPINES WAS ALREADY USING THE PALAPA SATELITE FOR HER DOMESTIC COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM WHILE MALAYSIA AND THAILAND WERE IN THE PROCESS OF TESTING THESE FACILITIES FOR THE RESPECTIVE DOMESTIC AND BORDER COMMUNICATIONS, HE SAID.

—BERNAMA MORE

ON SEA TRANSPORT, DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR EXPLAINED THAT ASEAN COUNTRIES WERE DETERMINED TO ENHANCE AND EFFECT ASEAN SELF RELIANCE IN SHIPPING PARTICULARLY WITH REGARD TO REASONABLE AND STABLE FREIGHT RATES.

THIS WAS ALSO TO ENSURE ADEQUATE, EFFICIENT AND ECONOMIC SHIPPING SERVICES FOR THE CARRIAGE AND EXPANSION OF INTRA AND EXTRA ASEAN TRADE.

THE MAJORITY OF ASEAN EXPORTS, BULKY LOW-VALUE PRIMARY COMMODITIES, WERE MAINLY SHIPPED TO EUROPEAN MARKETS BY SHIPS OWNED AND OPERATED BY COUNTRIES OUTSIDE THE REGION, HE SAID.

ON PORT FACILITIES, HE SAID THAT MOST OF THE MAJOR PORTS IN ASEAN HAD THE CAPACITY TO HANDLE ALL TYPES OF VESSELS FROM CONTAINER TO LASH, TANKERS, RO-RO, BULK CARRIERS AND OTHERS.

TO PROMOTE COOPERATION IN THE OPERATION OF PORTS IN THE REGION, SEVERAL INSTITUTIONS SUCH AS THE ASSOCIATION OF ASEAN PORTS AUTHORITIES, ASEAN SHIPOWNERS' ASSOCIATION AND THE FEDERATION OF ASEAN SHIPPERS COUNCIL HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED. — BERNAMA MORE 1214/ZCM

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THE ASSOCIATIONS ALSO CONTRIBUTED POSITIVELY TO THE EFFORTS TO STANDARDISE PROCEDURES IN MARITIME ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE REGION, HE SAID.

ON AIR TRANSPORT, DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR HOPED THAT ASEAN AND AUSTRALIA WOULD SOON BE ABLE TO RESOLVE THEIR PROBLEMS CONCERNING THE ASEAN OBJECTION TO THE AUSTRALIA'S NEW AVIATION POLICY.

APART FROM THE PRESENT EFFICIENT AIR COMMUNICATION NETWORK PROVIDED BY THE VARIOUS ASEAN NATIONAL AIRLINES, ASEAN COUNTRIES HAD ALSO AGREED TO ESTABLISH AN ASEAN AIRLINE, HE SAID.

ON ROADS AND RAIL SYSTEMS, HE SAID THAT BY VIRTUE OF THEIR GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION, THAILAND, MALAYSIA AND SINGAPORE ENJOYED THE BENEFIT OF A CONTINUOUS STRETCH OF ROAD AND RAIL SYSTEM WHICH RAN THROUGH THE THREE COUNTRIES.

ASEAN COUNTRIES WERE ALSO TAKING ACTION TO STANDARDISE DOMESTIC DRIVER LICENCE, UNIFORM ROAD SIGNS AND SIGNALS, AS WELL AS INSURANCE FACILITIES TO SMOOTHEN TRAVEL BY ROAD WITHIN THE REGION, HE SAID. — BERNAMA 1218/ZCM

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EARLIER, THE INDONESIAN INDUSTRY MINISTER, ENCIK A.R. SOEHOED, WHO IS THE CHAIRMAN OF THE ORGANISING COMMITTEE STRESSED THAT THE FURTHER GROWTH IN THE ECONOMIC VIABILITY OF ASEAN AS A REGIONAL ECONOMIC UNITY ALSO DEPENDED ON THE EXTENT AND NATURE OF ITS COOPERATION WITH OTHER REGIONS PARTICULARLY AN ADVANCED REGION LIKE THE EEC.

THE MINISTER POINTED OUT ALTHOUGH THE EEC HAD POTENTIAL RESOURCES AT ITS COMMAND, THE VOLUME OF ITS INVESTMENT IN THE ASEAN REGION WAS LAGGING BEHIND OTHER COUNTRIES.

TO DEVELOP A HEALTHY VIABLE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO REGIONS, HE FELT THAT THERE MUST BE A SOUND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT IN ASEAN, BOTH IN THE UPSTREAM AND DOWNSTREAM OPERATIONS. — BERNAMA

SINGAPORE'S SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR FINANCE ENCIK GOH CHOK TOK DISCLOSED THAT NEGOTIATIONS FOR DEEPER TARIFF CUTS WERE CURRENTLY BEING HELD TO PROMOTE INTRA-ASEAN TRADE.

TO DATE, 826 ITEMS HAD BEEN EXCHANGED AND IMPLEMENTED UNDER THE PREFERENTIAL TRADING ARRANGEMENT.

+IT IS LIKELY THAT THROUGH THIS ARRANGEMENT, AN ASEAN FREE TRADE AREA WILL ULTIMATELY BE CREATED, + HE SAID. — BERNAMA 1710/YF