

MAHATHIR - ASEAN

KUALA LUMPUR, NOV. 1 (BERNAMA) — (P) DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD HAS DESCRIBED ASEAN AS THE MOST ACTIVE AND VIABLE REGIONAL ORGANISATION IN THE WORLD NEXT TO THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY (EEC).

THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER TOLD AN ECONOMIC SOCIETY GATHERING IN SINGAPORE LAST NIGHT THAT THE REALITY OF ASEAN IN POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION WAS RECOGNISED BY ALL NOW.

SPEAKING ON +ASEAN CO-OPERATION, THE LESSONS FOR THE 80'S, + HE SAID THAT PEOPLE AND NATIONS WERE MORE LIKELY TO WORK TOGETHER IF THEY KNEW EACH OTHER.

AND IF COMMON VALUES AND BELIEFS WERE NOT POSSIBLE, AT LEAST THEY WOULD UNDERSTAND THE VALUES AND WAYS OF EACH OTHER.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR WHO IS ALSO TRADE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER, SAID THAT IN TIME, AN ASEAN COMMON MARKET WOULD EMERGE, THOUGH HE FELT THAT IT WOULD NEVER BE AS LIBERAL AS SOME PEOPLE WOULD WANT IT TO BE.

HE SAID THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS CREATING THIS COMMON MARKET HAD BEEN MADE THROUGH THE +SHALLOW CUT+ OF 10 PER CENT IN TARIFFS IN INTRA-ASEAN TRADE. — BERNAMA MORE 1920/AH

MAHATHIR - ASEAN 2 KUALA LUMPUR

IN HIS SPEECH RELEASED HERE, HE FELT THAT MUCH TIME AND GOOD-WILL WOULD BE NEEDED BEFORE SUBSTANTIAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION COULD BE ACHIEVED.

+BUT PROGRESS IS BEING MADE NEVERTHELESS, ALREADY THOUSANDS OF ASEAN PRODUCTS ARE GETTING FAVOURED TREATMENT WHEN ENTERING ASEAN COUNTRIES.

THE CUT IN TARIFFS IS STILL MINIMAL BUT THE FIRST STEP HAS BEEN TAKEN, + HE ADDED.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR POINTED OUT THAT ASEAN WAS NOT A MILITARY GROUP MODELLED ALONG THE LINES OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANISATION (NATO) OR THE FORMER SOUTHEAST ASIAN TREATY ORGANISATION (SEATO).

BUT THERE WAS CLEAR EVIDENCE OF BILATERAL DEFENCE ARRANGEMENTS WHICH INFLUENCED THE SECURITY OF ASEAN AS A GROUP, HE SAID.

+THERE IS NO COMMITMENT TO FIGHT TOGETHER IN THE EVENT OF A HOSTILE ACT FROM FOREIGN COUNTRIES BUT THE UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENTS AND ARMED FORCES AND THE ABILITY TO OPERATE TOGETHER MEANS THAT JOINT DEFENCE COULD BE EASILY AND SWIFTLY PUT UP. + — BERNAMA MORE 1947/BW

NO88 (F)

MAHATHIR - ASEAN 3 KUALA LUMPUR

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR ALSO SPOKE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF ASEAN MEMBERS IN ACQUAINTING EACH OTHER WITH THEIR RESPECTIVE CULTURES IN ORDER TO REDUCE SUSPICIONS AND ANTAGONISM.

ALTHOUGH THERE HAD BEEN SOME SIGNIFICANT ATTEMPTS TO APPRECIATE EACH OTHER AND TO DEMONSTRATE KNOWLEDGE OF VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE CULTURE OF ASEAN NATIONS, HE FELT THAT NOT ENOUGH ATTENTION HAD BEEN GIVEN TO THIS.

+CULTURE IS WHAT MAKES PEOPLE WHAT THEY ARE AND WHAT DETERMINES THEIR PERFORMANCE, + HE SAID.

+THUS, AT ASEAN GATHERINGS THE CULTURAL SHOWS OF THE HOST COUNTRY IS NEVER FORGOTTEN, AND THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ITEM OF THESE SHOW IS THE FINALE WHEN A POPULAR SONG FROM EACH OF THE ASEAN COUNTRIES IS SUNG.

+THIS GESTURE MAY APPEAR INSIGNIFICANT BUT IT HAS HELPED ASEAN SOLIDARITY MORE THAN A LOT OF OTHER ACTIVITIES, + DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID. — BERNAMA 1950/BW

103