

MAHATHIR
FROM ZAINOOR SULAIMAN

DENPASAR, JAN. 11 (BERNAMA) — ASEAN, WHICH HAS ACHIEVED A LEVEL OF GROUP COOPERATION, CAN CONTRIBUTE EFFECTIVELY TOWARDS THE GROWTH AND ADVANCEMENT OF THE PACIFIC REGION, MALAYSIAN DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TODAY.

THE MEMBER STATES HAD BEEN ABLE TO COOPERATE ON A NUMBER OF REGIONAL PROJECTS AND TO ENHANCE TRADE WHERE TRADE BETWEEN SOME OF THE PARTNERS WAS ALMOST NON-EXISTENT BEFORE, HE SAID.

+THE COMMON STAND ON MANY ISSUES OF INTERNATIONAL CONCERN IS ALSO EVIDENCE OF THEIR COHESIVENESS,+ HE TOLD MORE THAN 150 PARTICIPANTS AND OBSERVERS AT THE OPENING OF THE CONFERENCE +ASIA PACIFIC IN 1980S+ ORGANISED BY THE INDONESIAN CENTRE FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES (CSIS).

THE THEME OF THE THREE-DAY MEETING IS +TOWARDS GREATER SYMMETRY IN ECONOMIC INTERDEPENDENCE.+

IN HIS KEYNOTE ADDRESS, DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID ASEAN ECONOMIC COOPERATION WAS A BY-PRODUCT OF THE BASIC DESIRE FOR A FORUM TO SOLVE PROBLEMS AND CONFLICTS THAT WERE COMMON AMONG NEIGHBOURS.

ASEAN HAD NOW EMERGED NOT ONLY AS A VIABLE GROUPING BUT ONE WHICH WAS ECONOMICALLY DYNAMIC AND POLITICALLY STABLE.

+INTERDEPENDENCE IS SOMETHING THAT ASEAN BELIEVES IN,+ HE SAID.
— BERNAMA MORE 1600/SZ

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CONSEQUENTLY JOINT PROJECTS AND TAX POLICIES IN FAVOUR OF MEMBERS HAD BECOME A FEATURE OF ASEAN COOPERATION.

+AS THEY MOVE AWAY FROM THE ROLE OF PRODUCERS OF PRIMARY COMMODITIES INTO INDUSTRIALISATION, THEIR INTERDEPENDENCE ASSUMES GREATER SIGNIFICANCE,+ HE ADDED.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR STRESSED ASEAN HAD AN IMPRESSIVE POTENTIAL AS WAS EVIDENT FROM THE ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE OF ITS MEMBERS.

IN 1979, ASEAN ECONOMIES ON THE WHOLE WERE EXPECTED TO EXPAND BETWEEN SIX AND EIGHT PER CENT IN REAL TERMS.

THE PACIFIC AREA WAS CLEARLY A RICH AREA WITH TREMENDOUS POTENTIAL FOR DEVELOPMENT AND FOR INFLUENCING THE REST OF THE WORLD AND YET IT HAD NOT BEEN AS COHESIVE AND COORDINATED IN ITS DEVELOPMENT AS THE ATLANTIC REGION.

HE REMINDED THAT BEFORE ANY STEP WAS TAKEN, COUNTRIES IN THE REGION SHOULD APPRECIATE THE DELICACY AND COMPLEXITY OF BRINGING SO MANY IDEOLOGICALLY, CULTURALLY AND ECONOMICALLY DIFFERENT NATIONS TOGETHER. — BERNAMA MORE 1605/SZ

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HE SAID THAT ASSOCIATIONS OF NATIONS WERE OFTEN BRITTLE AND FRAGMENTATE EASILY UNDER THE SLIGHTEST STRAIN.

HOWEVER, THE ASEAN EXPERIENCE COULD PERHAPS PROVIDE A GUIDE AND INSPIRATION FOR PACIFIC COOPERATION.

IN THE RELATIVELY SHORT SPAN OF 10 YEARS, THE ASEAN ARRANGEMENT HAD BECOME AN EFFECTIVE GROUPING NOT BOUND SO MUCH BY THE DICTATES OF CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATIONS AS BY A STRONG SENSE OF COMMUNITY WHICH DEVELOPED ITS OWN MOMENTUM.

HE SAID ASEAN WAS NOT PREMISED ON ANY GRAND DESIGN.

+THERE IS NO ECONOMIC BLUE-PRINT BUT THE SPIRIT OF PARTNERSHIP CONTINUES TO BE NURTURED ON THE BASIS OF THE SIMPLE OBJECTIVE OF ESTABLISHING A +FIRM FOUNDATION FOR COMMON ACTION TO PROMOTE REGIONAL COOPERATION+ SET OUT IN A DECLARATION. IN ESSENCE, ASEAN IS AN EMBODIMENT OF AN ALMOST TELEPATHIC BELIEF IN PARTNERSHIP FOR PROGRESS, INTERDEPENDENCE AND MUTUALITY OF INTERESTS,+ HE SAID.
— BERNAMA MORE 1610/SZ

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DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID INTERDEPENDENCE WAS STILL VERY MUCH AN ECONOMIC CONCEPT THAT HAD NO REALITY FOR A LOT OF POOR NATIONS.

+TRUE INTERDEPENDENCE MUST MEAN NOT JUST BEING MUTUALLY DEPENDENT ON EACH OTHER BUT SOME DEGREE OF QUALITY OF STRENGTH TO SUPPORT EACH OTHER,+ HE SAID.

+THIS CAN ONLY COME ABOUT WHEN POOR COUNTRIES HAVE DEVELOPED TO THE STATE WHEN THEIR PARTICIPATION IN WORLD ECONOMY IS PALPABLE AND COMMENSURATE WITH THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE WELL-BEING OF THE WORLD.+

THE HONORARY CHAIRMAN OF CSIS, LT.-GEN. SOEDJONO HOEMARDANI, SAID THE BALI CONFERENCE WOULD EXAMINE THE NATURE OF RELATIONS AMONG NATIONS IN THE ASIA/PACIFIC REGION FOR THE NEXT DRCADE.

— BERNAMA 1613/SZ