

ASEAN-MAHATHIR ~~222~~

FROM MERVIN NAMBLER AND MARIA SAMAD

SINGAPORE, APRIL 23³⁰ (BERNAMA) — (P) DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TODAY DISMISSED ANY LIKELIHOOD OF A CUT ON TARIFFS FOR IMPORTS FROM OUTSIDE THE ASEAN REGION AND SAID THAT MALAYSIAN TARIFF LEVELS WERE ALREADY LOW ENOUGH.

THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT THE AVAILABILITY IN MALAYSIA OF GOODS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD WAS AMPLE EVIDENCE THAT TARIFF LEVELS WERE ALREADY LOW.

+WHAT IS NEEDED IS FOR OTHER COUNTRIES TO REDUCE TARIFFS LEVIED ON MALAYSIAN PRODUCTS,+ HE TOLD A NEWS CONFERENCE HELD JOINTLY WITH SINGAPORE'S MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY ENCIK GOH CHOK TONG AT THE CLOSE OF THE NINTH ASEAN ECONOMIC MINISTERS' MEETING, HERE.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR, WHO IS ALSO MALAYSIA'S MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY, WAS RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS ON WHETHER MALAYSIA WOULD REVIEW ITS TARIFFS IN THE LIKE OF THE STATEMENT BY SINGAPORE PRIME MINISTER ENCIK LEE KUAN YEW THAT IN PROMOTING INTRA-ASEAN TRADE, ASEAN SHOULD NOT ERRECT BARRIERS TO TRADE BETWEEN THE REGIONAL GROUP AND INDUSTRIAL COUNTRIES. — BERNAMA MORE 1928/HS
NO88 (F)

ASEAN-MAHATHIR 2 SINGAPORE ~~222~~

ENCIK LEE MADE THIS AND OTHER SUGGESTIONS IN HIS OPENING ADDRESS ON MONDAY. DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR POINTED OUT THAT TARIFF LEVELS IN MALAYSIA WERE RELATIVELY LOWER THAN THOSE IN THE PHILIPPINES AND INDONESIA.

ENCIK GOH SAID THAT SINGAPORE, THE PHILIPPINES AND INDONESIA WERE CURRENTLY WORKING TOWARDS A GENERAL REDUCTION IN TARIFF LEVELS.

REFERRING TO ENCIK LEE'S CALL FOR GREATER LATITUDE IN DEFINING CONSENSUS WHICH HAD BEEN THE RULE IN ALL

ASEAN AGREEMENTS SO FAR, DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID THE SUGGESTION MIGHT BE PRACTICABLE UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES.

ENCIK LEE HAD CALLED HIS SUGGESTION A '+FIVE MINUS ONE+' SCHEME AND SAID THAT WHEN FOUR COUNTRIES HAD AGREED ON A SUGGESTION AND ONE DID NOT OBJECT, THEN THE FOUR SHOULD PROCEED WITH THE PROJECT.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID THAT THE ECONOMIC MINISTERS FELT THAT THEY SHOULD, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, STILL AIM AT CONSENSUS. - BERNAMA MORE 1933/HS

ASEAN -MAHATHIR 3 SINGAPORE

+PUT THERE IS A DISTINCT POSSIBILITY THAT FOR A PARTICULAR PROJECT, ONE OR TWO COUNTRIES MAY NOT BE ABLE TO PARTICIPATE,+ HE SAID.

IN SUCH CASES IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO PROCEED WITH THE PROJECT AS AN ASEAN ONE AS LONG AS THE ONE OR TWO COUNTRIES DID NOT HAVE ANY STRONG OBJECTIONS.

+BUT THROUGHOUT THIS MEETING THIS NECESSITY DID NOT ARISE BECAUSE ALL PROBLEMS WERE RESOLVED THROUGH CONSENSUS,+ HE ADDED.

ENCIK GOH SAID THAT THE ECONOMIC MINISTERS AND PRIME MINISTER LEE HIMSELF FELT THAT ASEAN SHOULD AS FAR AS POSSIBLE AIM AT CONSENSUS IN REACHING DECISIONS.

HE ADDED THAT THE FIVE-MINUS-ONE PROPOSAL WOULD BE A PRACTICAL SUGGESTION UNDER THE ASEAN INDUSTRIAL COMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMME WHEN ONE OR TWO COUNTRIES LACKED THE COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE IN THE MANUFACTURE OF SOME COMPONENTS.

+UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES THE FIVE-MINUS-ONE PROPOSAL WOULD BE WORKABLE,+ HE ADDED. - BERNAMA MORE 1941/HS

NO90 (F)

ASEAN-MAHATHIR 4 SINGAPORE

ENCIK GOH SAID THAT A STUDY ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ASEAN PREFERENTIAL TRADING ARRANGEMENT WAS NOW UNDER WAY BUT THAT IT WOULD TAKE SOME TIME TO COMPLETE IN VIEW OF THE ADDITIONAL ITEMS GRANTED TARIFF CUTS. - BERNAMA 1943/HS