

WHY THE NATION IS

STAR 19 NOV 1983

LOOKING

SOUTH TOO

Dr. Mahathir - policy - South to South

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — Since Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad became Prime Minister in mid-1981, Malaysia has been paying more attention to nations in East Asia and in the developing world.

The Premier, frustrated with the attitude of the developed West in trade and transfer of technology, is of the conclusion that the nation would be better off with countries such as Japan and South Korea where industrialisation is concerned.

He also feels that the developing nations can no longer depend on their former colonial masters and that it is better for them to work closely together for their mutual benefit.

Instead of depending solely on North-South co-operation, he has taken the initiative in getting closer to nations in the South which are more aware of their common problems in trade, investment and exchange of technical expertise.

In the last two years, he has travelled extensively but mainly to countries in East Asia, the Indian sub-continent, Eastern Europe and the Middle East.

He has yet to officially visit the developed West and, in fact, cancelled a trip to Australia scheduled for this month. However, he was prepared to travel to islands in the South Pacific, which are off the beaten track where tourists are concerned.

In all such trips, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir was accompanied not only by government officials but also by some top Malaysian businessmen because he wanted such visits to have a dual purpose — to make official contact and to look for trade and investment opportunities.



Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir ... frustrated with the attitude of the west

He has found that leaders in these countries are more responsive to such visits and that there can be frank exchanges of views on ways to improve bilateral co-operation.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir has decided that there must be more to such official visits than merely having state dinners and exchanging pleasantries. There must be meaningful and genuine attempts to help and learn from each other.

On such trips, he has convinced his hosts of his seriousness and sincerity that the developing nations must co-operate closely and that Malaysia will be prepared to study ways on how this could be carried out by both the government and private sectors.

With countries such as Japan and South Korea, Malaysia can learn their work ethics to improve productivity and benefit from the transfer of technology. In turn, Malaysia can provide technical and economical assistance to under-developed countries such as those in the South Pacific.

In nations such as Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Western Samoa and the Solomon Islands, Malaysia can play the role of donor and investor. These countries are trying to stand on their own feet economically and Datuk

Seri Dr Mahathir is confident that Malaysia can play a useful role in helping them along.

They are in no position yet to accept the technology of the developed world but as a developing nation, Malaysia's knowledge and experience in the technical field is easier for them to absorb.

Malaysian businessmen can provide invaluable expertise to them in developing the commodity sectors such as in the cultivation of oil palm and rubber and even in the mining sector.

In addition, the South Pacific islands are ready markets for Malaysian goods.

Some Malaysian companies, such as Guthries and the Kuok group, already have investments in the South Pacific though Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir would like to see more local businessmen take advantage of investment opportunities there.

To show his seriousness, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir has encouraged several large Malaysian companies to team up to form the Malaysian Overseas Investment Corporation (MOIC) based on the Japanese *sogoshusha*.

The idea is for MOIC to study the investment climate in a nation and to promote the sales of non-commodity products, particularly in manufactured goods, there.

To facilitate Malaysian businessmen going to these islands, the Government set up the High Commission in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, last year with Encik Kamaruddin Abu heading the mission.

Together with Encik Karim Mazuki, the High Commissioner in Fiji, the two missions will cover the whole region for the Government and provide assistance to Malaysians, wishing to go there either for business or pleasure.