

GET GOING, ASEAN TOLD

S 17 9 JUL 1985

“It is time for us who recognise the great opportunities to stop waiting and start moving, to stop being merely dreamers and to be doers.”

— Dr Mahathir yesterday.

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad declared today that now is the time for Asean economic co-operation to be taken to “new frontiers”

Asean had “an opportunity, indeed an obligation, to all our peoples to strive to break new ground” and should “take each new challenge and turn it into an opportunity,” the Prime Minister said when he opened the 18th Asean Ministerial meeting at the Shangri-La Hotel this morning.

“Do we merely sit and wait? Or do we move to create the conditions and to mould the events that will allow us to achieve the breakthrough we must have with regard to economic co-operation?” he asked the Foreign Ministers and delegations from the six Asean nations and observers present.

He also pointed out that the “opportune time” may happen by chance but more often it came by “the sweat of our brows and the courage of our convictions, by

human effort allied to human determination."

"It is time for us who recognise the great opportunities to stop waiting and start moving, to stop being merely dreamers and to be doers," he said.

Dr Mahathir also told traders dazzled by the "vast" China market to remove the tinsel from their eyes and face reality.

"Statistics tell us what our deflected imaginations fail to grasp — that the Asean market is four times the size of the China market; that the Asean market is at our very doorstep, not in a faraway land whose business practices and systems are uncertain and in some areas still an unknown quantity," he said.

The two-day meeting of Asean Foreign Ministers will end tomorrow. The Asean six will then meet their dialogue partners — United States, Australia, New Zealand, the European Economic Community (EEC), Canada and Japan.

While the basic thrust of his speech was on economics, Dr Mahathir also touched on the two other key issues which Asean is concerned with at the moment — the Kampuchean conflict and the drug menace.

On Kampuchea, the Prime Minister urged Vietnam to respond constructively to Asean's initiatives in finding a solution to the problem.

His reminder came just a few days after the Vietnam News Agency reported that Hanoi had rejected the Asean proposal for "proximity talks" between members of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK) and a Vietnamese delegation which could include representatives from the Hanoi-backed Heng Samrin regime of Kampuchea.

The Vietnamese rejection came even before Asean had formally proposed the "proximity talks." The Malaysian-initiated proposal was agreed to by Asean Foreign Ministers and it was announced this afternoon that it had been conveyed to Vietnam by the Malaysian Embassy in Hanoi.

Dr Mahathir stressed that the only guarantee of a viable solution to the Kampuchean issue lay in the reasonable accommodation of the vital interests of all the parties to the dispute.

"As much as the other States in the Indo-Chinese peninsula, and indeed everywhere else, desire to live free and independent in their own homeland, so do the Kampuchean people," he said.

On the drug menace, Dr Mahathir called for the setting up of a United Nations organisation similar to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees.