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KUALA LUMPUR, JUNE 3 (BERNAMA) -- DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD IS TO SEND PERSONAL LETTERS TO HIS COUNTERPARTS IN 127 THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES SEEKING THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE SETTING UP OF THE SOUTH COMMISSION AIMED AT CHARTING PRAGMATIC STRATEGIES ON ECONOMIC AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES.

SOURCES SAID TODAY THE THREE-PAGE LETTER OF THE PRIME MINISTER WOULD BE DELIVERED BY MALAYSIAN HEADS OF MISSION TO THE FOREIGN MINISTERS OF THE COUNTRIES WHERE THEY WERE BASED AND THEN DELIVERED TO THE LEADERS.

THE LETTERS WERE EXPECTED TO REACH THE LEADERS AT THE LATEST BY NEXT WEEKEND.

IN COUNTRIES WHERE MALAYSIA DID NOT HAVE REPRESENTATION, THE LETTERS WOULD BE DELIVERED BY THE HEADS OF MISSIONS TO THEIR COUNTERPARTS, THE SOURCES ADDED.

FOREIGN MINISTER TENGKU AHMAD RITHAUDDEEN MET 28 HEADS OF MISSION OF SOUTH COUNTRIES AT WISMA PUTRA HERE TODAY AND INFORMED THEM OF THE PROPOSED INDEPENDENT COMMISSION OF THE SOUTH ON DEVELOPMENT ISSUES. -- MORE

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IN WHAT IS DESCRIBED AS THE SECOND STAGE TOWARDS THE ESTABLISHING OF THE COMMISSION, WISMA PUTRA TODAY INSTRUCTED ALL MALAYSIAN HEADS OF MISSION TO EMBARK ON A SIMILAR EXERCISE.

THE PRIME MINISTER'S LETTER WOULD TOP THESE EFFORTS, SAID WISMA PUTRA DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL DATUK NOOR ADLAN YAHAYAUDDIN.

THE COMMISSION IS A PROPOSAL BY THE SOUTH-SOUTH II SUMMIT OF SCHOLARS AND STATESMEN OF THE THIRD WORLD HELD HERE EARLY LAST MONTH, AT WHICH IT WAS DECIDED TO SET UP A STEERING COMMITTEE TO STUDY THE TERMS OF REFERENCE AND IDENTIFY MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR IS CHAIRMAN OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE WHICH HAS TO COMPLETE ITS TASK IN TIME TO LAUNCH THE COMMISSION AT THE NON-ALIGNED SUMMIT IN HARARE, ZIMBABWE, ON SEPT 1.

TENGKU RITHAUDDEEN SAID WHAT WAS HOPED FOR WAS THAT THESE COUNTRIES WOULD RESPOND POSITIVELY AND CONTRIBUTE FINANCIALLY TOWARDS THE COMMISSION.

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+THE AMOUNT CONTRIBUTED IS NOT OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE. WHAT IS, IS THEIR GESTURE,+ HE SAID.

TENGKU RITHAUDDEEN TOLD REPORTERS THAT IT WAS TIMELY FOR THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES TO ACT IN CONCERT IN MEETING CHALLENGES THEY WERE FACING.

HE MENTIONED PROTECTIONISM, DEBT AND FINANCIAL ISSUES AMONG OTHERS AS PROBLEMS BESETTING THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES WHICH WERE ALSO AFFECTED BY LOW COMMODITY PRICES. -- BERNAMA

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