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KUALA LUMPUR, MAY 5 (BERNAMA) -- PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TODAY CALLED FOR THE SETTING UP OF AN INDEPENDENT COMMISSION ON SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION.

HE SAID THE COMMISSION, WITH A LIMITED LIFE SPAN, SHOULD REPORT TO THE GROUP OF 77 (G77) ON SPECIFIC PROPOSALS FOR PRACTICAL SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION.

OPENING THE SECOND SOUTH-SOUTH SUMMIT HERE, THE PRIME MINISTER ALSO SAID THAT THE CARACAS PROGRAMME OF ACTION, WHICH WAS ADOPTED AT A HIGH-LEVEL MEETING OF THE G77 IN 1981, SHOULD SERVE AS THE BASIC FRAMEWORK FOR PROMOTING ECONOMIC COOPERATION.

DESCRIBING IT AS +THE CENTRE OF OUR EFFORTS+, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THAT UNFORTUNATELY NO TANGIBLE BENEFITS HAD BEEN DERIVED BY MEMBER STATES FROM THIS PROGRAMME.

ONE AREA OF THE CARACAS PROGRAMME THAT HELD PROMISE WAS THE EFFORT TO ESTABLISH A GENERAL SYSTEM OF TRADE PREFERENCE (GSTP) WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF WHICH THEY COULD LOWER THEIR BARRIERS TO EACH OTHER, THEREBY FACILITATING TRADE FLOW IN THE SOUTH, HE ADDED.

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+THE GSTP NEGOTIATIONS ARE CURRENTLY ARE UNDERWAY AND I AM SURE THAT WE WOULD ALL LIKE TO SEE THESE NEGOTIATIONS ADVANCE AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE,+ HE SAID.

HE ALSO SAID THAT BILATERAL OR GROUP COOPERATION AMONG THE SOUTH-SOUTH COUNTRIES WOULD BE MORE PRACTICAL.

+IT WOULD BE WONDERFUL IF ALL THE HUNDRED OVER COUNTRIES OF THE SOUTH COULD STAND UNITED AND COOPERATE WITH EACH OTHER, BUT THE TRUTH IS THAT THAT SCENARIO CAN ONLY HAPPEN IN DREAMS.+

HE ALSO REGRETTED THAT THE DECLARATION ON COLLECTIVE SELF-RELIANCE ADOPTED BY THE NON-ALIGNED SUMMIT IN NEW DELHI IN 1983 HAD BEEN +NO MORE THAN A PAPER PLEDGE.+

+OUR COLLECTIVE PERFORMANCE HAS BEEN DISMAL,+ HE ADDED.

IN THE DECLARATION, LEADERS OF THE SOUTH HAD PLEDGED THEMSELVES TO STRENGTHEN SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION ON A PRIORITY BASIS AND THEY ALSO ADOPTED A COMPREHENSIVE ACTION PROGRAMME GEARED TO PRODUCING TANGIBLE BENEFITS FOR THE SOUTH THROUGH THEIR COOPERATIVE EFFORTS IN DIFFERENT SECTORS. -- MORE

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WITH IDENTICAL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT (NAM) AND G77, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID IT WAS NECESSARY AND DESIRABLE THAT THERE SHOULD BE HARMONISATION OF THE SOUTH-SOUTH PROGRAMMES OF THE NAM AND THE WIDER AND MORE ENCOMPASSING G77.

ALL MEMBERS OF THE NAM ARE MEMBERS OF THE G77.

THE PRIME MINISTER SUGGESTED THAT THE INSTITUTIONAL MACHINERY AND PROGRAMMES OF ONE SHOULD BE READILY AVAILABLE TO SERVICE THOSE OF THE OTHER AND THAT WHEREVER POSSIBLE, THERE SHOULD BE COMMON PROGRAMMES FOR BOTH BODIES.

+WE DO NOT NEED ANOTHER ORGANSIATION. ALL WE REALLY NEED IS THE RECOGNITION THAT UNLESS WE HELP STRENGTHEN EACH OTHER, WE ARE NOT GOING TO BE IN POSITION SINGLY OR IN A GROUP TO GET FAIR TREATMENT FROM THE NORTH,+ HE SAID.

+BUT TOO MANY COUNTRIES WITH TOO MANY DIFFERENT INTERESTS JUST CANNOT UNITE AND WE HAVE TO RECOGNISE THIS AND DO THE NEXT BEST THING,+ HE SAID, ADDING THAT +WE CAN COOPERATE BILATERALLY OR REGIONALLY, SO LONG AS OUR PARTNERS ARE FROM THE SOUTH.+ -- MORE

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HE SAID THAT THIS WAS SOMETHING THAT COULD NOT BE ACHIEVED OVERNIGHT NOR WOULD THE RESULT OF COOPERATION MANIFEST ITSELF IMMEDIATELY BUT ANY INTERCOURSE BETWEEN THE COUNTRIES OF THE SOUTH MUST LEAD TO A STRENGTHENING OF THEIR POSITION.

HE SAID THE SEVEN MAJOR INDUSTRIALISED COUNTRIES OF THE NORTH WERE MEETING TODAY IN TOKYO AND THEIR DELIBERATIONS AND DECISIONS WOULD HAVE FAR-REACHING IMPACT ON THE GLOBAL ECONOMY.

+AND YET WE IN THE SOUTH WHOSE LIVES WILL BE CRUCIALLY AFFECTED BY THE DECISIONS OF THIS SUMMIT WILL HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO SAY IN THEIR DELIBERATIONS,+ HE SAID.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR ALSO SUGGESTED THE IDEA OF HAVING A MINISTER FROM EACH COUNTRY WITH THE ASSIGNMENT TO OVERSEE SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION WHEREBY HE COULD MONITOR HIS OWN GOVERNMENT'S ORIENTATION TO SOUTH-SOUTH PROGRAMMES AND ENSURE THAT APPROPRIATE FOLLOW-UP ACTION WAS TAKEN.

ON THE SUMMIT, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID IT SHOULD SPELL OUT CLEARLY WHAT MEASURES SHOULD BE ADOPTED TO IMPLEMENT VARIOUS PROGRAMMES AS THE SOUTH WOULD NOT PROGRESS UNTIL AND UNLESS THE MEMBERS COMMITTED THEMSELVES TO CERTAIN SPECIFIC TARGETS. -- MORE  
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+WHAT WE NEED FROM THIS CONFERENCE ARE A FEW IDEAS AND PROPOSALS WHICH CAN LEND CREDIBILITY TO SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION. WE NEED TO FIND WAYS AND MEANS TO MOBILISE THE PRIVATE SECTOR THROUGHOUT THE SOUTH= WE MUST GET OUR PRIVATE SECTOR TO INTERACT WITH EACH OTHER,+ HE SAID.

HE ALSO HOPED THAT THE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE THIRD WORLD FOUNDATION AND THE INSTITUTE OF STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, JOINT SPONSORS OF THE SUMMIT, WOULD SPAWN A NETWORK OF THE THIRD WORLD RESEARCH INSTITUTES WHICH WOULD COLLECTIVELY DO RESEARCH WORK ON DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION.

+WE NEED TO POOL OUR EXPERIENCES AND RESOURCES FOR THIS IMPORTANT TASK,+ HE SAID.

THE FOUR-DAY SUMMIT IS ATTENDED BY ABOUT 80 PEOPLE FROM 31 COUNTRIES. -- BERNAMA  
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