

Boost economic relations: Dr M

Developing countries must take the initiative

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight that developing countries must take the initiative to promote greater economic co-operation among themselves.

The Prime Minister said they could not afford to wait for the creation of a new economic order before they worked together.

He said the developed countries lacked the commitment to view worldwide economic problems in their proper perspective.

And this had contributed to the prolonging of the problems, he said at a dinner held at Sri Perdana in honour of Burmese Prime Minister U Maung Maung Kha.

Calling for co-operation among developing countries, he said the problem of high interest rates, growing protectionism and falling primary commodity prices could not be redressed in isolation. "Nor could it await a global consensus for the creation of a new international economic order."

Dr Mahathir said that Malaysia had not only strived to generate momentum for greater South-South co-operation through the formation of a South-South Commission, but had also extended technical and other assistance to other developing countries.

He said the Malaysian Government's support for Asean as a viable economic organisation was testimony of the country's commitment to regional co-operation.

Testimony

"I am convinced that given necessary Governmental encouragement, the national enterprises in Burma and the private sector in Malaysia could seize the opportunities available in the fields of trade and joint-venture investment," he said.

He said that countries in the region, like anywhere else, needed a peaceful and stable environment to devote their efforts to socio-economic development.

However, the situation in Kampuchea was a threat to peace and stability in the region, he said.

"It represents a retrogressive

step in our efforts towards peaceful collaboration among all States in the region irrespective of political ideology."

He said that Malaysia was concerned that people of Kampuchea were still experiencing foreign military occupation and domination. "They continue to be denied their right of self determination."

On the problem of drug abuse and illicit trafficking, he said it was gratifying that a fresh beginning had been made in the war against drugs.

"The recently concluded International Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking (ICDAIT) was able to adopt a comprehensive programme action to combat drug abuse and trafficking.

Research

"I am convinced that the drug abuse problem can be eradicated if all nations show the necessary political will," he added.

Earlier at meeting with Mr U Maung Kha here, Dr Mahathir said developing countries needed to coordinate research into new uses for their primary exports to boost the prices.

He said that this was to

counter the developed nations' research in finding substitutes for the commodities.

He felt that there was no reason for developing nations not to succeed if they decided to adopt this approach.

"If the developed nations can combine their research resources and be successful, we can also do the same," said Dr Mahathir.

Foreign Ministry secretary-general, Tan Sri Zainal Abidin Sulong briefed the Press on behalf of both Prime Ministers.

Dr Mahathir pointed out that Burma and Malaysia could cooperate in finding new uses for tin since both were major exporters of the metal.

He also touched on economic cooperation between the two countries which he felt had a lot of room for expansion, considering that Burma's trade with Malaysia between 1984 and 1986 only amounted to 0.2 per cent of Malaysia's total foreign trade.

He believed that Malaysian businessmen might be interested to import Burmese gems, diamonds, pearls and teak.

Dr Mahathir said that the Burmese Prime Minister had agreed to train some Malaysians in teak cultivation.