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CHOGM-MAHATHIR

LANGKAWI, OCT 21 (BERNAMA) -- THE LANGKAWI DECLARATION ON THE ENVIRONMENT IS A MILESTONE AS FOR THE FIRST TIME, THE VIEWS OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES HAVE BEEN TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN A WORLD FORUM, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TODAY.

HE SAID THE DECLARATION, WHICH WAS UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED BY THE COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES, REPRESENTED A BALANCED APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM AND

MARKED THE COMMONWEALTH'S CONTRIBUTION TO GLOBAL EFFORTS TO ARREST ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION.

HE WAS SPEAKING AT A PRESS CONFERENCE AT WHICH THE DECLARATION WAS RELEASED. PRESENT AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE AT THE RETREAT VENUE OF THE PELANGI BEACH RESORT HOTEL HERE WAS COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY-GENERAL SIR

SHRIDATH RAMPHAL.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT WHILE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES SHOULD DRAW UP THEIR OWN PROGRAMME OF ACTION IN LINE WITH THE DECLARATION, THE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES SHOULD BE UNSPARING IN THEIR ASSISTANCE. -- MORE
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SIR SHRIDATH SAID THE DECLARATION RESULTED LARGELY FROM THE INITIATIVE AND EFFORTS OF MALAYSIA IN GETTING IT NEGOTIATED AT A VERY EARLY STAGE. THE DECLARATION HAS BEEN ACCEPTED BY EVERY MEMBER COUNTRY.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR ADMITTED THERE WERE SOME DIFFICULTIES IN GETTING THE AGREEMENT OF SOME COUNTRIES +BUT EVENTUALLY EVERYBODY CAME ROUND TO THE VIEW THAT WE SHOULD REACH A UNANIMOUS AGREEMENT.+

THERE WAS INITIAL TALK THAT ANOTHER BODY OR ANOTHER FUND MIGHT BE CREATED BUT THE DECLARATION ACCOMMODATED ALL THESE VIEWS.

HE NOTED THAT IN THE DISCUSSIONS IN KUALA LUMPUR, THERE WAS SOME MENTION OF RESETTLING INHABITANTS OF LOW-LYING AND ISLAND COUNTRIES VULNERABLE TO THE RISE OF THE SEA LEVEL (CAUSED BY THE GREENHOUSE EFFECT).

HOWEVER, IT WAS EMPHASISED AT THE DISCUSSIONS THAT THE PEOPLE WHOSE LAND MIGHT GO UNDER THE WATER DID NOT WANT TO BE RESETTLED ELSEWHERE.

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CHOGM-MAHATHIR 3 LANGKAWI

AS SUCH, EFFORTS SHOULD BE MADE TO PREVENT THEIR LAND FROM BEING SUBMERGED.

HE DISMISSED THE SUGGESTION THAT THE DEBATE ON SOUTH AFRICA HAD OVERSHADOWED OTHER ISSUES. SOUTH AFRICA AND THE ENVIRONMENT RECEIVED EQUAL ATTENTION, HE SAID.

HE ALSO SAID THE SOUTH AFRICAN ISSUE MIGHT BE DEALT WITH AS A SEPARATE DECLARATION INSTEAD OF BEING PART OF A GENERAL DECLARATION, AND, IN THIS CONNECTION, +WE HAVE YET TO FINALISE THE DECLARATION ON SOUTH AFRICA.

REFERRING TO THE SECOND PARAGRAPH OF THE DECLARATION, HE SAID IT WAS AS TO EMPHASISE THAT POLLUTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT WAS NOT A RECENT PHENOMENON BUT THE CUMULATIVE EFFECT OF MANY YEARS OF ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION.

ON BANKS RESCHEDULING SOUTH AFRICA'S LOAN REPAYMENTS, HE SAID +ALL IS NOT LOST. LOTS OF OTHER THINGS CAN BE DONE APART FROM RESCHEDULING. THIS INCLUDES ACCESS TO NEW LOANS; INVESTMENT FUNDS, CONTINUED SANCTIONS AND WITHDRAWAL BY SOME OF THE COMPANIES IN SOUTH AFRICA.+

ALL THESE THINGS, HE SAID, WERE STILL POSSIBLE. -- BERNAMA
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