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MAHATHIR-FUND

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PULAU PINANG, 20/FEB (BERNAMA) -- PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TODAY CALLED FOR THE SETTING UP OF A GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT TRUST FUND AS AN AN INTERIM MEASURE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION.

HE SAID THE TRUST FUND COULD BE FINANCED BY LEVIES IMPOSED ON THE PRODUCTION OF OZONE-DEPLETING SUBSTANCES AND MANAGED BY AN INTERNATIONAL BODY WITH BROAD AND EFFECTIVE REPRESENTATION.

THE ROOT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS WAS THE MISMANAGEMENT OF THE GLOBAL ECONOMY AND DELIBERATE DISTORTION OF THE VALUE OF THE RENEWABLE NATURAL PRODUCTS FROM THAT OF MAN-MADE CAPITAL GOODS AND SERVICES, HE SAID.

+UNLESS DEVELOPING COUNTRIES RECEIVE A FAIR DEAL FOR THEIR NATURAL RESOURCE-BASED PRODUCE AND EXPORTS, THEY SHOULD NOT BE DISCRIMINATED AGAINST FOR WHATEVER LITTLE DAMAGE THEY MAY BE CAPABLE OF DOING TO THE ENVIRONMENT,+ HE SAID WHEN OPENING THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON TROPICAL OZONE AND ATMOSPHERIC CHANGE AT UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA HERE.

THE THREE-DAY CONFERENCE, ORGANISED JOINTLY BY THE UNIVERSITY AND THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME IS BEING ATTENDED BY SCHOLARS AND ENVIRONMENTALISTS FROM 40 COUNTRIES. -- MORE
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THE PRIME MINISTER TOLD THE CONFERENCE THAT ANY INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVE TO ADDRESS GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES SHOULD TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THE OVERALL BALANCE OF THE THIRD WORLD DEVELOPMENT, PARTICULARLY IN SOLVING THE DEBT CRISES IN SOME DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND THE NEED TO INCREASE THE FLOW OF DEVELOPMENT FINANCE.

THE URGENCY TO STABILISE THE FOREIGN EXCHANGE EARNINGS OF LOW-INCOME COMMODITY PRODUCERS SHOULD ALSO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT, HE ADDED.

+IF WE USE OUR OWN NATURAL RESOURCES, THEN THAT IS CAPITAL DEPRECIATION, NOT A COST TO US, BUT WHEN WE IMPORT TECHNOLOGY AND MACHINERY, WE HAVE TO COUNT THEIR CAPITAL DEPRECIATION AS A COST TO THE NATION,+ HE SAID.

+YET DEPRECIATION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL CAPITAL IS NOT COUNTED AT ALL THERE OUGHT TO BE A FAIR DEAL AND NOT BASED ON THE PRESUMPTION THAT THE ENVIRONMENT IS FREE,+ HE SAID. -- MORE

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HE SAID THE WORLD HAD YET TO DEVELOP AN EFFECTIVE TOOL THAT COULD HELP ENSURE THAT FUTURE CALCULATIONS OF NATIONAL INCOME TRULY REFLECTED +SUSTAINABLE+ INCOME.

THE CURRENT CALCULATIONS IGNORED THE DEPLETION OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES BASE AND UNDERESTIMATED THE VALUES OF AGRO-BASED AND FOREST PRODUCTS AND ALSO VIEWED THE SALES OF NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCES SUCH AS TIN AND PETROLEUM AS INCOME.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE SUBJECT OF ENVIRONMENT WAS FAR TOO IMPORTANT TO BE LEFT ENTIRELY TO THE EXTERNAL FREE MARKET FORCES AND IT WOULD TAKE QUITE SOME TIME FOR THE CURRENT SYSTEM OF NATIONAL ACCOUNTING TO BE REVISED.

IN THE MEANTIME, THE WORLD COMMUNITY SHOULD SERIOUSLY CONSIDER THE SETTING UP OF A TRUST FUND FINANCED BY LEVIES IMPOSED ON THE EMISSION OF GREENHOUSE GASES, THE PRODUCTION OF CHLORO-FLUORO-CARBONS (CFCs) AND OTHER OZONE-DEPLETING SUBSTANCES AND EVEN CHEMICALS THAT WERE IN COMPETITION WITH THE PRODUCTION OF NATURAL PRODUCT-BASED BIOCIDES, HE SAID.

ANOTHER POSSIBLE SOURCE OF REVENUE WAS THE SALES TAX ON VARIOUS IMPORTS OF NATURAL PRODUCTS INCLUDING AGRO-BASED AND FOREST PRODUCTS THAT WERE NOT PRODUCED ON A SUSTAINABLE BASIS, HE ADDED. -- MORE

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DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID MALAYSIA WAS COMMITTED TO THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT NOT ONLY ON ISSUES RELATING TO THE PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT BUT ALSO IN ENSURING THAT ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES WERE NOT ABUSED BY CERTAIN QUARTERS.

MALAYSIA HAD PLAYED ITS DUE ROLE BOTH AT THE REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL TO PROMOTE WORLD DEVELOPMENT THAT WAS WELL-BALANCED WITH THE ENVIRONMENT, HE SAID.

IT MADE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE LANGKAWI DECLARATION ON ENVIRONMENT ADOPTED BY THE COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT LAST OCTOBER IN KUALA LUMPUR, WHICH WAS ALSO THE VENUE FOR THE SIGNING OF THE REGIONAL AGREEMENT ON CONSERVATION OF NATURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES BY ASEAN MEMBERS IN 1985.

THE PRIME MINISTER ADDED THAT MALAYSIA HAD ALSO SUCCESSFULLY PROMOTED PRIVATE INVESTMENT IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF FULLY INTEGRATED TOXIC WASTE COLLECTION, TRANSPORTATION TREATMENT AND SAFE REPOSITORY OF FULLY TREATED, INNOCUOUS RESIDUES FACILITIES, WHICH WOULD BE THE FIRST OF ITS TYPE IN THE WORLD WHEN COMPLETED. -- MORE

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U E434 AAE
MAHATHIR-FUND 5 PULAU PINANG

THE PRIME MINISTER CALLED ON THE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES TO TAKE EFFECTIVE MEASURES TO CURB THEIR HEAVY CONSUMPTION OF FOSSIL FUELS AND OZONE-DEPLETING SUBSTANCES.

HE LATER VISITED AN EXHIBITION HELD BY THE UNIVERSITY ON RESEARCH DONE BY ITS PROFESSORS.

PRESENT WERE EDUCATION MINISTER ANWAR IBRAHIM, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT MINISTER DATUK AMAR STEPHEN YONG AND PULAU PINANG CHIEF MINISTER DR LIM CHONG EU. -- BERNAMA
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