

SUMMIT-MAHATHIR R'R'R'

(P)

KUALA LUMPUR, JUNE 1⁹⁰ (BERNAMA) -- THE INAUGURAL SUMMIT MEETING OF THE GROUP OF 15 (G-15) BEGAN HERE TODAY WITH DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD MAKING A STRONG PLEA TO SOUTH COUNTRIES TO TAP THE BENEFITS OF THE LARGE ECONOMIC POTENTIAL ARISING FROM ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND INCREASED TRADE WITH EACH OTHER.

TO ACHIEVE THIS, THE PRIME MINISTER CALLED ON THE DEVELOPING SOUTH COUNTRIES TO RESTRUCTURE THEIR HUGE MARKETS WHICH WERE NOW LARGELY ACCESSIBLE ONLY TO THE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES OF THE NORTH.

THE NATIONS OF THE SOUTH WERE PRACTICALLY ALL QUITE IGNORANT OF THE TREMENDOUS TRADE OPPORTUNITIES THAT HAD BEEN EXPLOITED BY THE TRADERS OF THE NORTH; HE PRIME MINISTER SAID IN A THOUGHT-PROVOKING SPEECH WHICH SET THE TONE FOR DISCUSSIONS DURING THE THREE-DAY SUMMIT.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR ASKED THE SOUTH COUNTRIES TO REDRESS AN AREA CRUCIAL TO THEIR ECONOMIC COOPERATION -- THE ABSENCE OF ANY DIRECT AIR LINKS BETWEEN THEMSELVES.

STRESSING HIS POINT, HE TOLD THE HEADS OF GOVERNMENT AND DELEGATES ATTENDING THE OPENING CEREMONY AT PARLIAMENT HOUSE, + FOR MANY OF THE DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES, COMING TO MALAYSIA HAS MEANT GOING TO THE NORTH

FIRST -- A ROUNDABOUT, LENGTHY AND COSTLY JOURNEY+. -- MORE
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SUMMIT-MAHATHIR 2 KUALA LUMPUR R R R

+EVERYTHING GOES NORTH BEFORE GOING SOUTH, RESULTING IN INCREASED COSTS, INEFFICIENCY AND INCONVENIENCE,+ HE SAID ADDING THAT THIS PREVENTED ECONOMIC, TRADE AND CULTURAL EXCHANGES FROM DEVELOPING.

THE G-15 COMPRISES ALGERIA, ARGENTINA, BRAZIL, EGYPT, INDIA, INDONESIA, JAMAICA, MALAYSIA, MEXICO, NIGERIA, PERU, SENEGAL, VENEZUELA, YUGOSLAVIA AND ZIMBABWE.

NINE OF THE G-15 MEMBER COUNTRIES ARE REPRESENTED BY EITHER THEIR PRESIDENTS OR PRIME MINISTERS TO THE SUMMIT WHILE THE REST MOSTLY BY THEIR FOREIGN MINISTERS ON BEHALF OF THEIR HEADS OF GOVERNMENT.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE +SOUTHERN ROUTES+ BETWEEN THE COUNTRIES OF THE SOUTH MUST BE STUDIED AND INITIATED IN VIEW OF ITS IMPORTANCE FOR TRADE AND COMMERCE.

+IT IS IMPORTANT AND WILL BE PROFITABLE IN ITSELF. LET US LOOK AT ALL OUR COMMUNICATION POTENTIALS AND LET US TAKE THE RISK,+ HE SAID ADDING A START MUST BE MADE AND THE RISK BE SPREAD BETWEEN THOSE WHO COULD AFFORD. -- MORE

SUMMIT - MAHATHIR 3 KUALA LUMPUR 'R'R'R'

AT THE OUTSET OF HIS SPEECH, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE G-15, WHICH WAS FORMED AT THE NON-ALIGNED SUMMIT IN BELGRADE LAST YEAR, WAS NOT MEANT AS A GROUP TO COUNTER THE GROUP OF 7 INDUSTRIALISED COUNTRIES OF THE NORTH.

AS HE PUT IT: +WE ARE NOT SELF-APPOINTED ARBITERS AND REGULATORS OF THE WORLD'S ECONOMIC AFFAIRS, NEITHER ARE WE CONSPIRATORS AGAINST THE NORTH.+

HE EXPLAINED THE G-15 INSTEAD WAS FORMED TO ENABLE THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES TO SIT IN CONFERENCE TO DISCUSS AND FIND SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEMS BESETTING THE SOUTH COUNTRIES.

+RATHER WE HAVE COME TOGETHER TO CONSULT, EXCHANGE VIEWS AND EXPLORE THE POTENTIAL, WHICH IS LARGELY UNTAPPED, FOR SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION.+

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THE G-15 WOULD ALSO FOSTER DIALOGUE WITH THE NORTH BECAUSE THE ABSENCE OF SUCH A DIALOGUE HAD CAUSED THE ECONOMIC GAP BETWEEN THE NORTH AND SOUTH TO WIDEN FURTHER SINCE THE FAILURE OF THE FIRST NORTH-SOUTH DIALOGUE.-- MORE
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U E920 AAE BMX DHC LIB
SUMMIT-MAHATHIR 4 KUALA LUMPUR R R R

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR, WHO IS CHAIRMAN OF THE SUMMIT, BLAMED THE NORTH FOR MOST OF THE PROBLEMS CONFRONTING THE SOUTH, ARGUING THAT SUCH PROBLEMS COULD NOT BE DUE TO SOUTH-SOUTH INTERACTION SINCE +WE HAVE VERY LITTLE TO DO WITH EACH OTHER+.

+IF THERE ARE SOUTH-SOUTH PROBLEMS, THEY ARE BETWEEN NEIGHBOURS. EVEN HERE WE OFTEN SEE THE HANDS OF THE NORTH,+ HE SAID, CITING AS AN EXAMPLE, THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR WHERE THE SAME COUNTRY WAS SUPPLYING ARMS TO BOTH SIDES.

REFERRING TO EXTERNAL DEBT, HE SAID THIS MASSIVE PROBLEM WAS NOT DUE TO THE SOUTH PURPOSELY WANTING TO BORROW AND NOT PAYING UP.

HE UNDERLINED THE NEED FOR LENDERS TO BE PREPARED TO ACCEPT THE RISKS OF LENDING AND TO DEVISE WORKABLE SOLUTIONS AND IF ALL ELSE FAILED, TO ACCEPT LOSSES.

JUST LIKE PROVISIONS MADE FOR WRITE-OFFS WHEN COMMERCIAL LOANS WENT BAD, THE LENDERS MUST ACCEPT THE NEED TO MAKE ADJUSTMENTS AND WORK OUT SCHEMES WHEN THEIR SOVEREIGN LOANS WENT BAD, HE ADDED. -- MORE

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SUMMIT-MAHATHIR 5 KUALA LUMPUR R R R

NATIONS CANNOT BE +BANKRUPTED+ IN THE SAME WAY COMPANIES OR INDIVIDUALS WERE, HE SAID, ADDING THAT +YOU CANNOT TELL A PEOPLE TO LIVE AT SUBSISTENCE LEVEL UNTIL THEY PAY OF THEIR DEBTS+.

+BANKRUPTS CAN DIE, NATIONS CANNOT. WE CANNOT MAKE DEBT-SLAVES OF NATIONS, NOT IN THIS SO-CALLED ENLIGHTENED AGE,+ HE ADDED.

THE PRIME MINISTER CALLED ON THE SOUTH NATIONS TO CONTINUE THEIR DIALOGUE WITH THE NORTH IN ORDER TO SOLVE THEIR DEBT PROBLEMS AND THE DETERIORATING TERMS OF TRADE.

ALL SOUTH COUNTRIES, HE SAID, MUST CREATE NEW APPROACHES TO ENABLE THEM TO BENEFIT FROM THE WEALTH OF THE SOUTH.

ON THE SUMMIT, HE SAID: + THIS CONFERENCE WILL FAIL IF WE OF THE SOUTH DO NOT ADDRESS THOSE PROBLEMS WHICH LEND THEMSELVES TO SOLUTIONS BASED ON OUR OWN EFFORTS.+

+WE CANNOT REALLY EXPECT OTHERS TO SOLVE OUR PROBLEMS TO THEIR OWN DETRIMENT. AT BEST THEY WILL ONLY HELP ON A BASIS OF ENLIGHTENED SELF-INTEREST+. -- BERNAMA

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