

'We are not conspirators against North'

# Dr M: The South must help itself

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From Lim Thow Boon

CARACAS, Fri. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today gave his full endorsement to the central message of the South Commission's report that developing countries — referred to collectively as the South — must move themselves and find their own way in the world.

"There is no denying the moral case for assistance," he said at the launch of the report.

"But we in the South cannot afford to forget that the most important helping hand that we all need is at the end of our own right arm."

The Prime Minister, who was making a strong plea for self-reliance among countries of the South, added: "It is an iron law of history that no one can do anything to us worse than what we can do to ourselves."

"No one can do anything for us that is as valuable as what we can do for ourselves."

Among those present at the ceremony, held in the main hall of the Teresa Carreno Theatre, were Venezuelan president Carlos Andres Perez, chairman of the South Commission Dr Julius Nyerere and Foreign Ministers and representatives of Third World countries.

The report sets out the plans and strategies for advancing co-operation among countries of the South.

Dr Mahathir said in dealing with the

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developed North, the South must start from the secure foundation of realism.

"There is very little to be gained in taking on the North.

"Those of us who believe in South-South co-operation are not conspirators against the North.

"We are believers in concerting our strength, in taking advantage of the potentials for co-operation between us, in seeking dialogue with the North and a say in the affairs of a world that is ours as much as anyone else's."

Dr Mahathir was confident that the

commission's report would not be shelved and forgotten. Steps had been taken to guard against such an eventuality.

"At the very least, the report of the South Commission will move from here to the active agenda of the G-15, made up of not only Malaysia and Venezuela but of 13 other States committed to advancing South-South co-operation."

Dr Mahathir also touched on the demise of the East-West conflict and the challenges this might pose to the South.

He said he did not believe, as some did, that the end of the Cold War would herald a North-South conflict.

"Conflicts become great and are enduring only where strength meets strength and power confronts power. This is not the South-North reality."

He said the greater danger was that many countries of the South might be left forgotten, "standing sullenly by the wayside, in the dark shadow of poverty and backwardness...".

"It is my fervent hope that what we do today and what we will together do in the years to come ... will ensure that the impoverished will be heard and that as much of the Third World as possible will be part of the mainstream of development."