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AIPO-MAHATHIR

BY SYED IMRAN ALSAGOFF

SINGAPORE, SEPT 11 (BERNAMA) -- DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID THE HISTORIC AND DRAMATIC CHANGES IN EASTERN AND WESTERN EUROPE, WITH THEIR PROFOUND IMPLICATIONS, ARE TRANSFORMING THE GLOBAL POLITICAL AND SECURITY ENVIRONMENT.

+THESE HAVE ENGENDERED HOPES OF A MOVEMENT TOWARDS GREATER PEACE AND COMMON PROSPERITY,+ THE PRIME MINISTER SAID IN HIS MESSAGE TO THE 11TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE ASEAN INTER-PARLIAMENTARY ORGANISATION (AIPO) HERE.

HOWEVER, IN HIS MESSAGE READ BY THE MALAYSIAN DELEGATION LEADER, DEPUTY HUMAN RESOURCES MINISTER DATUK K. PATHMANABAN, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE DIMINISHING SUPERPOWER RIVALRIES DO NOT NECESSARILY MEAN A MORE SECURE OR JUST INTERNATIONAL ORDER.

+POWERFUL STATES FREE FROM THE SYSTEM OF CHECKS AND BALANCES COULD BE MORE DISPOSED TO EXERT THEIR WILL ON SMALLER OR WEAKER ONES, WHILE AREAS OF TENSION AND CONFLICT PERSIST IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE WORLD,+ HE SAID.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID A NEW TENSION POINT HAS DEVELOPED IN THE GULF FOLLOWING THE IRAQI INVASION AND ANNEXATION OF KUWAIT AND THE CONSEQUENT ASSEMBLY THERE OF A FEARSOME ARRAY OF FORCES.

IN THE ECONOMIC SPHERE, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE SEVERE DISPARITIES AND INEQUITIES THAT PLAGUED THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE DEVELOPING AND DEVELOPED COUNTRIES STILL PERSISTED. -- MORE

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+THE PREOCCUPATION OF THE WEST WITH EASTERN EUROPE LEAVES THE PROBLEMS OF THE THIRD WORLD LARGELY IGNORED,+ HE SAID.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID ASEAN MUST MEET THOSE CHALLENGES BY FORGING AHEAD IN A DYNAMIC AND COHESIVE MANNER.

+THE CHANGING GLOBAL SECURITY EQUATION GIVES US A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN PEACE AND STABILITY IN OUR OWN SOUTHEAST ASIAN REGION.+

THE ZONE OF PEACE, FREEDOM AND NEUTRALITY (ZOPFAN) TAKES ON A NEW RELEVANCE AND OFFERS THE POSSIBILITY OF INTEGRATING THE INDOCHINA COUNTRIES INTO THE REGIONAL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEM.

HOWEVER, HE ADDED, THE PROBLEM OF CAMBODIA RISKED BEING PUSHED INTO THE PERIPHERY, UNLESS THE CAMBODIAN PARTIES AND THEIR EXTERNAL ALLIES DEMONSTRATED THE NECESSARY POLITICAL WILL AND VISION AND EMBRACE AN EQUITABLE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT.

+THE LONG STANDING PROBLEM OF THE VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE, MOST OF WHOM ARE IN SEARCH OF A BETTER LIFE IN THE WEST, CONTINUES WITHOUT CEASE.

+WE HAVE TO PERSIST ON THE COURSE THAT THE ASEAN COUNTRIES HAVE SET AT THE JAKARTA ASEAN MINISTERIAL MEETING IN JULY THIS YEAR,+ DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID.

ASEAN, HE ADDED, MUST CONTINUE TO PRESS FOR A MORE URGENT SOLUTION TO THAT PROBLEM. -- MORE

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AT THE ECONOMIC LEVEL, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID ASEAN NEEDS TO DEVISE IMAGINATIVE AND PRACTICAL PROGRAMMES OF ECONOMIC COOPERATION EXPLOITING THE VAST POTENTIALS WITHIN THE REGION.

+TOGETHER WE HAVE ALSO TO DEAL WITH GROWING TRENDS TOWARDS PROTECTIONISM, TRADING BLOCS AND THE EXPLOITATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND HEALTH ISSUES TO ARREST OUR GROWTH AND RESTRICT OUR ACCESS TO THE MARKET OF THE ADVANCED ECONOMIES.+

THOSE DEVELOPMENTS, HE SAID, COULD ADVERSELY AFFECT THE GROUPING'S WELL BEING.

IN THE MEANTIME, ASEAN SHOULD EXPLORE AND EXPLOIT THE ECONOMIC POTENTIALS ARISING FROM SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION AND THE OPENING OF EASTERN EUROPE.

HE SAID AIPO'S CONSIDERATION OF THOSE AND OTHER ISSUES AND THE DECISIONS IT ADOPT WOULD NO DOUBT STRENGTHEN AND ENTRENCH ASEAN COOPERATIVE RELATIONS.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR DESCRIBED AIPO AS AN IMPORTANT FORUM IN THE NETWORK OF INTERLOCKING RELATIONSHIPS THAT ASEAN COUNTRIES HAVE NURTURED OVER THE YEARS TO PROMOTE UNDERSTANDING, DEVELOP AN ASEAN IDENTITY AND ENHANCE COOPERATION AMONG MEMBER STATES. -- BERNAMA  
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