

R E858 AAE  
MAHATHIR-TIMBER 90  
FROM GWENDOLINE BENJAMIN

(2)  
KUCHING, FEB 16 ((BERNAMA)) -- PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR  
MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TODAY TOLD EUROPEAN COMMUNITY MINISTERS THAT THE  
ANTI-TROPICAL TIMBER CAMPAIGN -- CURRENTLY A POPULAR CAUSE FOR  
WESTERN ENVIRONMENTALISTS

-- WAS A MATTER OF ECONOMIC SURVIVAL FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES.  
SPEAKING AT THE OPENING OF THE EIGHTH ASEAN-EC MINISTERIAL  
MEETING (AEMM) HERE, HE SAID MALAYSIA WAS GREATLY CONCERNED ABOUT  
THE CAMPAIGN BECAUSE IT HAD RESULTED IN SOME EC COUNTRIES BOYCOTTING  
TROPICAL TIMBER.

MALAYSIA, HE SAID, RECOGNISED THAT THERE WERE ENVIRONMENTAL  
GROUPS GENUINELY CONCERNED ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT.

BUT, THERE WERE SOME WHICH CARRIED OUT THEIR CAMPAIGNS BASED ON  
+SENTIMENTS+ AND +IRRATIONALITY+ RESULTING IN OCCASIONS WHERE ACTION  
WAS TAKEN NOT BECAUSE IT WAS RIGHT BUT BECAUSE IT WAS +POPULAR+, HE  
SAID.

+WHILE THIS MAY BE A VOTE-CATCHING ISSUE FOR SOME, FOR US IN THE  
DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, IT IS A MATTER OF ECONOMIC SURVIVAL,+ HE  
ADDED. -- MORE

1216MST 16 02 90

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R E859 AAE  
MAHATHIR-TIMBER 2 KUCHING

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR WARNED THAT THE BOYCOTT MIGHT BACKFIRE ON  
THOSE LOBBY GROUPS BECAUSE MORE FOREST LAND MIGHT BE CLEARED FOR  
OTHER DEVELOPMENT PURPOSES SUCH AS AGRICULTURE.

THE TIMBER INDUSTRY, HE SAID, PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE  
MALAYSIAN ECONOMY, COMPRISING 5.1 PER CENT OF MALAYSIA'S TOTAL  
EXPORT EARNINGS AND GIVING DIRECT EMPLOYMENT TO 162,000 PEOPLE.

THERE WAS INDICATION ALSO THAT THE INDUSTRY IS POISED TO MAKE A  
BIGGER CONTRIBUTION TO THE ECONOMY AS MALAYSIA CONCENTRATED ON  
VALUE-ADDED PRODUCTS ESPECIALLY FURNITURE MAKING, HE ADDED.

+IF THE ENVIRONMENTALISTS ARE TRULY CONCERNED, THEY SHOULD  
ENCOURAGE THE RELOCATION OF TIMBER-BASED INDUSTRIES INTO THE TIMBER  
PRODUCING COUNTRIES,+ HE SAID.

INDUSTRIALISED COUNTRIES COULD HELP TOWARDS THIS BY LOWERING  
THEIR BARRIERS AGAINST TIMBER MANUFACTURED PRODUCTS BECAUSE SUCH  
RESTRICTIONS ONLY RETARDED INDUSTRIALISATION AND ENCOURAGED MORE  
TREES TO BE FELLED, HE SAID.

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1218MST 16 02 90

D493

R E860 AAE  
MAHATHIR-TIMBER 3 KUCHING

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID ASEAN COUNTRIES WOULD LIKE TO SEE DISCUSSIONS ON THE ENVIRONMENT ISSUE AT A MORE CONSTRUCTIVE LEVEL SO THAT THE FOCUS WOULD BE ON JOINT EFFORTS BY BOTH DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES.

THE LANGKAWI DECLARATION ON THE ENVIRONMENT ADOPTED AT THE COMMONWEALTH SUMMIT IN KUALA LUMPUR LAST OCTOBER COULD SERVE AS A USEFUL BASIS FOR ASEAN AND EC TO ACT ON, HE ADDED.

TURNING TO THE PENANS AND THE ALLEGED DISRUPTION OF THEIR NOMADIC LIFE CAUSED BY LOGGING ACTIVITIES, THE PRIME MINISTER EMPHASISED THAT MALAYSIA WOULD NOT MAKE ANY APOLOGIES FOR TRYING TO RAISE THEIR LIVING STANDARDS.

MALAYSIAN POLICY, HE SAID, WAS TO BRING ALL JUNGLE DWELLERS INTO THE MAINSTREAM OF SOCIETY.

HE ADDED: +THERE IS NOTHING ROMANTIC ABOUT THESE HELPLESS, HALF-STARVED AND DISEASE-RIDDEN PEOPLE.

+WE DO NOT INTEND TO TURN THE PENANS INTO HUMAN ZOOLOGICAL SPECIMENS TO BE GAWKED AT BY TOURISTS AND STUDIED BY ANTHROPOLOGISTS WHILE THE REST OF THE WORLD PASSES THEM BY.+ -- MORE  
1220MST 16 02 90

D498

R E863 AAE  
MAHATHIR-TIMBER 4 KUCHING

REFERRING TO THE AFFECTED PENANS, HE SAID THEY FORMED ONLY ABOUT 900 OF THE TOTAL PENAN POPULATION OF 9,000 IN SARAWAK, MOST OF WHOM HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFULLY RESETTLED.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR HOPED THE EC MINISTERS AND THEIR DELEGATIONS WOULD HAVE A BETTER APPRECIATION OF THE PENAN SITUATION DURING THEIR STAY HERE.

ON THE TOPIC OF DRUGS, WHICH IS INCLUDED IN THE AGENDA OF THE TWO-DAY AEMM, HE SAID MORE FORWARD MOVING ASEAN-EC COOPERATION WAS ESSENTIAL IN THE GLOBAL EFFORT TO COMBAT DRUG ABUSE AND TRAFFICKING.

THERE SHOULD BE NO LET UP IN THE WAR AGAINST DRUG ABUSE, HE SAID, ADDING HE WAS GLAD COUNTRIES HAVE PLEDGED MORE INTENSIFIED COOPERATION, AS LAID OUT IN THE 1987 VIENNA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON DRUG ABUSE AND ILLICIT TRAFFICKING WHICH HE CHAIRED.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR ALSO SAID MALAYSIA WELCOMED THE CONVENING OF INFORMAL TALKS BETWEEN THE INVOLVED PARTIES IN JAKARTA AT THE END OF THE MONTH IN RECENT EFFORTS BEING MADE TO PEACEFULLY SETTLE THE 11-YEAR-OLD CAMBODIAN CONFLICT. -- MORE  
1229MST 16 02 90

R E864 AAE  
MAHATHIR-TIMBER 5 KUCHING

HE SAID THE DECISION OF THE FIVE PERMANENT MEMBERS OF THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL TO INVOLVE THEMSELVES IN RESOLVING THE CONFLICT WAS ALSO SIGNIFICANT AND HE WELCOMED THE AUSTRALIAN PROPOSAL WHICH CALLED FOR AN ENHANCED UN ROLE IN A SETTLEMENT.

HE ADDED WAS ALSO IMPORTANT FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, PARTICULARLY THOSE ADOPTING +HIGH MORAL POSITIONS+, TO ENSURE A FULL AND DURABLE SOLUTION TO THE VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE PROBLEM AS SPELLED OUT IN THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OF ACTION (CPA) REACHED AT LAST YEAR'S GENEVA CONFERENCE.

MALAYSIA, WHICH OFFERS TEMPORARY REFUGE TO ABOUT 20,000 BOAT PEOPLE, AND THE OTHER ASEAN ASYLUM COUNTRIES, HAVE BORNE THE BURDEN FOR OVER 14 YEARS, HE SAID.

BUT, ASYLUM WAS NOW BEING ABUSED BY VIETNAMESE WHO WERE LEAVING FOR A BETTER LIFE IN THE WEST AND THEIR CONTINUING INFLUX HAD PLACED +UNACCEPTABLE PRESSURES+ ON THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL FABRIC IN MALAYSIA, HE ADDED.

THE AEMM IS BEING ATTENDED BY ALL ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS EXCEPT FOR BRUNEI WHICH IS REPRESENTED BY ITS DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER. DATUK ABU HASSAN OMAR IS LEADING THE MALAYSIAN DELEGATION.

REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE 12 EC NATIONS COMPRISE FIVE FOREIGN MINISTERS FROM IRELAND, ITALY, HOLLAND, PORTUGAL AND SPAIN AND STATE MINISTERS AND SENIOR OFFICIALS. -- BERNAMA

1245MST 16 02 90