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R E877 AAE ENG MES
ASEAN-MATUTES
BY SALBIAH SAID

KUCHING, FEB 16 (BERNAMA) -- THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY HAS REAFFIRMED THAT IT WILL NOT WITHDRAW ITS INTEREST FROM THE REST OF THE WORLD, INCLUDING ASEAN, DESPITE THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN EASTERN EUROPE, EC COMMISSIONER FOR NORTH-SOUTH RELATIONS, ABEL MATUTES SAID TODAY.

+LET ME REAFFIRM HERE WITH UTMOST CLARITY THAT THE EC WILL FULFILL BOTH ITS RESPONSIBILITIES ON ITS OWN CONTINENT AND ITS RESPONSIBILITIES ELSEWHERE IN THE WORLD,+ HE TOLD THE 8TH ASEAN-EC MINISTERIAL MEETING HERE. PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD OPENED THE TWO-DAY MEETING.

ALTHOUGH DEVELOPMENTS IN EASTERN EUROPE HAD FUNDAMENTALLY ALTERED THE POST-WAR FRAMEWORK OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS WITHIN WHICH THE EC HAD DEVELOPED, HE ASSURED ASEAN COUNTRIES THAT THE EC WOULD NOT CLOSE ITS DOORS TO ASEAN EXPORTS.

IN ADDITION, THE SINGLE EUROPEAN MARKET WOULD BRING NEW ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR ASEAN AND ALSO COMPLEMENT THE EXISTING INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS OF THE EC, ESPECIALLY WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE (GATT), ENCIK MATUTES SAID.

HE ADDED: +THE RENEWED ECONOMIC STRENGTH THAT WILL RESULT FROM 1992 WILL ALLOW THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY TO CARRY OUT FULLY ITS RESPONSIBILITIES AS A MAJOR PARTNER NOT ONLY IN THE EUROPEAN CONTINENT, BUT ALSO WORLDWIDE.+ -- MORE
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R E878 AAE ENG MES
ASEAN-MATUTES 2 KUCHING

ENCIK MATUTES NOTED THAT THE ASIA-PACIFIC ECONOMIC COOPERATION (APEC) FORUM WAS NOW AN EMERGING REALITY WITH AN AMBITIOUS PROGRAMME FOR COOPERATION BETWEEN MAJOR PARTNERS AROUND THE PACIFIC BASIN.

AS A MAJOR TRADING PARTNER OF ASIA-PACIFIC AND ASEAN, IN PARTICULAR, HE SAID, THE EC WOULD CONTINUE TO FOLLOW THIS DEVELOPMENT WITH GREAT INTEREST.

HE SAID: +ONE THING IS CLEAR IN OUR MINDS -- WITHIN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION, ASEAN REPRESENTS A KEY PARTNER AND MUST REMAIN ONE OF ITS STRONG PILLARS.

+WE EUROPEANS VALUE OUR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP WITH ASEAN AND WILL REMAIN COMMITTED TO STRENGTHENING BOTH ASEAN ITSELF AND THE EC-ASEAN TIES.+

ON THE EXTERNAL FRONT, HE SAID THE EC WAS BUILDING A NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH EASTERN EUROPE AND IT RECENTLY CONCLUDED A 10-YEAR TREATY WITH THE AFRICAN, CARRIBEAN AND PACIFIC COUNTRY MEMBERS OF THE LOME CONVENTION.

IT WOULD ALSO BE REVIEWING AND RESHAPING ITS POLICIES VIS-A-VIS ASIA, LATIN AMERICA AND THE MEDITERRANEAN.

HE ADDED THAT ON THE POLITICAL FRONT, BOTH, THE EC AND ASEAN HAVE A COMMON TASK IN THE PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF CONFLICTS, FURTHERING DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPING FREE MARKET ECONOMIES AND SOCIAL JUSTICE. -- MORE

R E879 AAE ENG MES
ASEAN-MATUTES 3 KUCHING

AT THE SAME TIME, BOTH HAVE ALSO FULFILLED THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES VIS-A-VIS THE VICTIMS OF WAR, OPPRESSION AND ECONOMIC HARDSHIP BY TAKING CARE OF THE VERY LARGE NUMBER OF DISPLACED PERSONS IN SOUTH ASIA.

ENCIK MATUTES SAID TRENDS TOWARDS A MULTIPOLAR WORLD GREATER RELATIONS FORMING BETWEEN COHERENT REGIONAL GROUPING AND BETWEEN LARGE REGIONS, INSTEAD OF BEING ORGANISED MAINLY BETWEEN THE THREE MAIN POLES (EC, US, AND JAPAN).

THERE WAS A NEED TO DEVELOP THE LINKAGES BETWEEN THESE POLES AND REGIONS, HE ADDED.

+NOTHING WOULD BE MORE DANGEROUS FOR THE WORLD THAN SEEING MILITARY CONFRONTATION REPLACED BY ECONOMIC CONFRONTATION,+ HE SAID, ADDING THAT BOTH ASEAN AND EC INDEPENDENCE, PROSPERITY AND STABILITY WOULD BE BETTER SERVED BY A STRENGTHENING OF ASEAN-EC RELATIONS. --

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1415MST 16 02 90