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Mahathir-timber

from Abdul Rahman Sulaiman

BRASILIA, June 27th (Bernama) -- Malaysia is considering organising a formal meeting among timber producing countries to map out a common strategy for adoption at the forthcoming United Nation's conference on environment and development.

The conference is scheduled to be held in June next year in Rio de Janeiro, about 1,200 km southeast of here.

Disclosing this here Wednesday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said such a strategy was necessary in the face of mounting pressure from developed countries against tropical logging. *oversea trips.*

He told a press conference on the second day of his official visit to Brazil that at the moment Malaysia was already in close consultations with several timber producing countries on the matter.

+Certainly it is possible to have a formal meeting with timber producing countries to discuss this. We will consider it,+ he said in response to a question on whether or not Malaysia would consider a more formal meeting with the countries concerned to discuss the matter, since they had another year to go before the commencement of the UN conference.
-- more

♥27/06/15-15MST

CNS3821

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It is understood that several developed countries are now pressing for the adoption of a convention during the proposed conference to restrict logging activities.

Malaysia and several other producer countries are said to be more in favour of a less binding declaration in respect of the matter.

The Prime Minister said that while Malaysia shared the concern of many with regard to logging, it could not allow pressure against logging to mount to the extent of curbing development.

+We believe that the need to maintain ecology must be balanced with the development needs of the country,+ he said.

+Even if we were to cut the forests, we will allow them to regenerate to ensure there is sustainable development,+ he said. -- more

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The Prime Minister, who earlier met Brazilian President Fernando Collor de Mello at the Planalto Palace, said the subject was one of several matters raised during the discussion.

He said he was pleased that the President appreciated Malaysia's stand and he believed that the two countries could cooperate on the matter.

Referring to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the Prime Minister said Malaysia was not hopeful that the Uruguay Round of the Multilateral Trade Negotiations would come up with a regime beneficial to the developing countries.

As of now, it was too preoccupied with the problem of the North, particularly North America and Europe, and as such not much attention was given to the problems of developing countries.

However, he believed that if countries of the South were to speak with one voice at such an international forum, the chances of them getting heard was greater. -- more

CNS3828

R GE 27-06 00159 EG764

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Asked for his comment on the recent proposal by former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher for the establishment of the Atlantic Pact grouping North America, Europe and Scandinavian countries, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said it was frightening to hear what such a grouping could do as a trade bloc.

However, he believed that it was only Puan Thatcher's personal opinion and Malaysia would have to study it further.

On bilateral issues, the Prime Minister said the president and he had identified several areas of cooperation to further enhance ties between the two countries.

They included the possible setting up of joint ventures for deep-sea oil exploration and the production of car components.

He said that although the national oil corporation, Petronas, had been involved in oil exploration for some time, it had so far only concentrated in the continental shelf. -- more

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CNS3830

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With the Brazilian companies' experience in deep-sea exploration, Brazilian companies were welcomed to make a bid for such an activity in Malaysia possibly on joint venture with Petronas.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia would also welcome Brazilian companies to set up joint ventures in Malaysia for the production of automobile components.

He said that like Malaysia, Brazil had also been producing cars.

With longer years of experience and higher production volume (one million units a year), the Brazilian expertise could be tapped by Malaysia, he said. -- Bernama

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