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REPEAT

S. AMERICAN, CARIBBEAN GROUPS ASEAN'S NEXT DIALOGUE PARTNERS?

Mahathir - dialogue

from Donald Baptist

CASTRIES (St Lucia), Dec 4 (Bernama) -- Latin American and Caribbean regional groupings can become Asean's dialogue partners and help each other, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said here Tuesday.

He said that as the European Community (EC) was an Asean dialogue partner, he saw no reason why dialogue partnership could not be extended to Latin America and the Caribbean.

+The Caribbean group would be interested in having dialogue with us and we can find out how we can help each other. + he told a press conference at the end of a three-day visit to this West Indian island nation.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir, who left for Barbados enroute home, said this had also been mentioned during the summit of the Group of 15 developing countries which he attended in the Venezuelan capital, Caracas, from Nov 27 to 29.

He said that if the regional groupings, like the Andean group and the Rio Group in Latin America and the Organization of East Caribbean States (OECS) were interested, Asean could study the possibility of making them dialogue partners. -- more

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Mahathir - dialogue 2 Castries (St Lucia)

He would be reporting on his meetings in Venezuela and the Caribbean to the Asean heads of government meeting in Singapore next month.

In St Lucia, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir held discussions with Prime Minister John Compton and met Grenada Prime Minister Nicholas Braitwaite at a lunch organised by the local private sector on Monday.

On transit in Barbados, he would meet its Prime Minister, Erskine Sandiford during a brief tour of the island which is also a member of the Commonwealth.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir, who was asked about the implications of the EC single market next year, said the EC was evolving into a closed trading area which would discriminate against developing countries because it needed to support its own production capacities.

Reiterating Malaysia's stand against trading blocs, he said quotas and various qualifications on local content were being imposed and the situation was going to become more severe. -- more

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Mahathir - dialogue 3 Castries (St Lucia)

Nevertheless, Malaysia was talking to more liberal members of the EC, like Britain, to get as much advantage as possible, he added.

He also mentioned the formation of the North American Free Trade Area (Nafta) which he said might be extended to Central and South America and become a big trading bloc that would stifle free trade.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said: +So, what we have done is to try to collect the countries of East Asia together so that, at the GATT meetings and Uruguay Round (of Multilateral Trade Negotiations) and all that, we can speak for free trade because our countries' development depends on free trade.

+So, we will have to come together and talk as developing nations, may be with the support of the Caribbean countries, at the international fora to maintain free trade for that is the only way we can grow our own markets.

+Our people are too poor to stimulate economic growth.+

On environmental issues, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said he felt that it was grossly unfair for the developed countries to ask developing countries to maintain the quality of the environment while they (the North) did very little about it. -- more

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Mahathir-dialogue4 Castries (St Lucia)

He added that countries of the South should come together and speak with one voice, particularly at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro next year.

+Otherwise, the NGOs (non-governmental organisations) of the North are going to demonstrate and bring down governments not caring about their environment,+ he said.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir also said that the Commonwealth, though it had been called a social club, was useful for contacts and it had been responsible for some progressive moves, for example, with regard to South Africa.

And recently, it had been able to persuade Britain and Canada to write off a considerable amount of debt owed to them by the developing countries.

He was asked Malaysia's opinion on the increasing tendency by developed countries to link aid to what they considered a clean human rights record.

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▼04/12/11-55MST

CNS2129

U GE 04-12 00208 EA846

aae the

Mahathir - dialogue 5 Castries (St Lucia)

He said no one country should decide when aid should be given or not, + simply because they are the source of aid, doesn't mean that they have the right to make judgements. If there is to be any judgement, then that, judgement must be made by a neutral body, otherwise, the judgement may be based on bias and self-interests and that is not, right, + he added.

Asked about Malaysia's position on the United States' economic sanctions against Cuba, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said that except in the case of South Africa, Malaysia had never supported sanctions.

To Malaysia, Cuba was another country with which Malaysia had diplomatic and trade relations. + As much as, we don't, 'Like arm-twisting by any great power, we do not like this to be applied to Cuba, + he said.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir, who is the first Prime Minister from Malaysia, and possibly Asia, to visit St Lucia, one of the Windward Islands in the West Indies, said the trip had been a satisfying one which enabled him to learn about the Caribbean, St. Lucia in particular, its economy and development. -- more

▼04/12/12-01MST

CNS2132

U GE 04-12 00180 EA847

aae the

Mahathir - dialogue 6 Castries (St Lucia)

He said both countries had a lot to learn about each other: Malaysia about the highly developed tourist industry here and St. Lucia some of the things that Malaysia had been successful with.

He offered Malaysia's assistance to St. Lucia under the Malaysian Technical Co-operation Programme and said Malaysia was prepared to share the knowledge it had gained in science and technology, relevant to St. Lucia's needs.

He mentioned agricultural research, aqua-culture and food production as some of the fields in which Malaysia could provide assistance.

Malaysia produced a lot of things which might be of use to St. Lucia, among which was palm oil -- the cheapest edible oil available, he said.

As Malaysia exported large amounts of palm oil to the United States and all over the world, it might be useful to have a palm oil distribution depot in St. Lucia for distribution of the product, to other countries in the Caribbean, he added. -- more

▼04/12/12-06MST

CNS2136

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Mahathir - dialogue 7 (last) Castries (St. Lucia)

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir, who was accompanied by his wife, Datuk Seri Datin Paduka Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, rounded up his visit with a tour of the Pointe Seraphine Duty-Free Complex, reputedly the largest in the East Caribbean, and a helicopter trip to Soufriere, in the south of the island.

Here can be found St. Lucia's volcano and the Twin Pitons, two peaks, rising to more than 720 metres.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir planted two trees in the residence of Prime Minister John Compton, who later saw him off at, Vigie Airport. -- Bernama