

# Dr M: Include the Caribbean as

## From Fauzi Omar

CASTRIES (St Lucia), Wed. — Malaysia will take the initiative to convince other Asean members to include the Caribbean and possibly Latin American countries as additional dialogue partners, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

The Prime Minister said he will be presenting a report on the matter to Asean Heads of Government at their proposed Summit in Singapore next month.

Dr Mahathir said: "Even though the Caribbean is just a small group of island nations I don't see any reason why we should not extend an invitation for them to be our dialogue partners."

"From there we can find out how we can help each

other," he told a Press conference at the end of his three-day official visit to this West Indian island nation.

Asean's dialogue partners are the United States, the European Community (EC), Japan, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Korea.

"If the Caribbean is interested in becoming our dialogue partner we can definitely look into the matter. I will be presenting a report on the Caribbean, as well as on Venezuela and Latin America, to the Asean Heads of Government at our January meeting," said Dr Mahathir.

Dr Mahathir added that it was important for small nations like the Asean members and the Caribbean to

get together to form a common stand on certain issues in order to be more effective at international forums.

He said the trouble with countries in the South was that they were too weak to make their own stand or to make demands to the rich North. Dr Mahathir cited the environment problem as an example.

He said developing countries should come together and speak with one voice, particularly at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) meeting in Rio Janeiro, Brazil, next year.

Otherwise, Dr Mahathir reminded these countries, that non-Governmental organisations of the North were going to demonstrat-

and try to bring down the Governments of developing countries for not caring about their environment.

The Prime Minister said: "The North claims that the trees and the forests are very necessary to convert carbon dioxide into oxygen. But oxygen is not breathed by us in the South alone. It is also breathed by the North to keep them alive."

"They say we should conserve our forests. OK, but they must pay for the conservation. They just cannot ask the poor countries not to extract timber which is a source of wealth to them."

"Look at the number of cars that the rich North has and the amount of pollution that those cars cause in their countries. You will

gest source of pollution.

"They have nuclear plants. And all kinds of polluting chemicals are coming from there and not from us. So I think it is grossly unfair for them to ask us to maintain the quality of the environment while they do very little about it," said Dr Mahathir.

He added there was also an urgent need for developing countries to get together and speak against trading blocs, like the single European market and NAFTA (North American Free Trading Area).

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was generally against trade blocs because they stifled free trade.

He said the other thing that developing countries should get together and

## partners

fight against was the attempt to link aid by Western countries to a clean record of human rights.

"No one country should decide when aid should be given or not given. Just because they are the source of aid does not mean they have the right to make judgment."

"If there is to be judgment then that judgement must be made by a neutral body. Otherwise the judgment maybe be biased and made out of self interest," said Dr Mahathir.

During his visit here, apart from meeting St Lucia Prime Minister John Compton, Dr Mahathir also met Grenada Prime Minister Nicholas Braithwaite.

Last night, the Prime Minister flew to Barbados for a meeting with its Prime Min-

ister, Erskine Sandiford.

After dinner with Mr Sandiford, Dr Mahathir flew to London to catch a connecting flight to Kuala Lumpur. He is expected to arrive home tomorrow.

Touching on his visit to St Lucia, Dr Mahathir said on the whole it has been a very satisfying one and he hoped following his visit the relations between the two countries would be enhanced.

The Prime Minister said it could be useful to have a palm oil distribution depot in St Lucia for distribution to the other countries in the Caribbean.

He added there has been an enquiry for Malaysia's palm oil by a few St Lucia businessmen.

"It maybe just a small deal but we are happy."