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MAHATHIR SAYS ALL SHOULD PAY TO KEEP SEA LANES SAFE AND FREE
Mahathir-Straits

SINGAPORE, Jan 27¹ (Bernama) -- The cost of keeping **shipping** lanes free and safe should be not be responsibility of the littoral states alone, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

It was time that the international community appreciate the problems and the dangers faced by the littoral states of certain straits and sea-routes like the Straits of Malacca, he added.

+Is it too much to ask that those who use the passage and, the maritime nations contribute towards the cost of keeping **them free** and safe?" he asked when addressing the opening of the Fourth Asean Summit here.

The two-day summit, opened by Prime Minister **Goh Chok Tong** of Singapore, was attended by Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei, President Suharto of Indonesia, President **Corazon Aquino** of **the Philippines** and Prime Minister **Anand Panyarachun** of Thailand..

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the littoral states collected no dues nor were they rich. -- more

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He added: +On the other hand, maritime patrols by sea and by air are expensive. The maintenance of equipment and **personnel** to fight spillage and other damages are equally costly.

+While we dispute the claim that our forests 'belong to the whole world, we have always accepted that certain straits and sea-routes through our waters are international waterways+

It was of little concern to the littoral' states in the past when the ships were small and infrequent and carried no significantly dangerous cargo-but now not only, have the **number of ships** multiplied but their size had increased tremendously.

+In addition, the cargo they carry is often dangerous; for **example the** oil and chemical tankers,+ he said.

Referring to the Straits of Malacca, bordered by Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said there had been collisions and spillage of oil- onto the_ sea and **their** shores . -- more

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Not only was the clean up costly but damage to their fishing and tourist industries considerable and it took months for these industries to be lucrative again, he added.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir also spoke of the dangers posed by piracy where the pirates tied up the crew of ships they robbed of cash and valuables and left the vessel to sail unattended.

+It may deviate from its course and it **may collide** with another vessel or run aground, causing **all kinds of damage**,+ he added.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said if the world was fond of claiming rights **then the** world must also accept the responsibility of keeping these straits and shipping lanes free and safe. -- Bernama

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