

Mahathir urges G15 nations to think South

By WONG CHUN WAI

DAKAR (Senegal): Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has urged the Group of 15 member countries to think South and be proud of its traditions and institutions.

He said the South must progress together. "We must have confidence in ourselves. As a group, we can contribute towards our national resilience through collective effort."

Speaking at a meeting of G15 heads of state and government on Saturday, the Prime Minister said such an effort would contribute towards the group's own credibility.

The projects undertaken by the G15 would help build the fundamental infrastructure towards

South-South co-operation.

"In this regard, I am encouraged that more of us are coming out with ideas and initiatives," he said.

Dr Mahathir was confident these initiatives would strengthen the links that existed among the G15 members.

The South must start talking to each other to better understand and appreciate each other's needs and requirements.

"We must relate and interact with each other without intermediaries," he said.

Dr Mahathir recalled his first meeting with former Tanzanian President Julius Nyrere when he was chairman of the South Commission.

Nyrere, he said, had told him that the basic problem with the South

was that it was always looking up to the North.

"His message was that we must start looking within and among themselves." Dr Mahathir added.

The Prime Minister said the South was rich not merely in population, culture, natural resources but also in other fields.

"There are numerous indigenous technology being developed in the South which we can use in our countries at a much cheaper price and more relevant to our own development needs," he said.

He urged member countries to establish and enhance air and sea links and telecommunication facilities.

"Apart from trade links, there should also be extensive personal rela-

tionship among our own business communities," he said.

In this context, the Businessmen and Investment Forum held during summits deserved the G15's support, he said.

Dr Mahathir said the forum was designed to promote interactions among the private sectors.

Zimbabwe, he said, would co-ordinate the businessmen forum project and that it should also be extended to other developing countries.

Dr Mahathir also said the Kuala Lumpur summit in 1990 had agreed to translate its group's collective commitment into a number of projects.

"Some of these projects, which are crucial to the foundation of our South-South efforts, have

already begun to bear fruit," he said, citing the South Investment, Trade and Technology Data Exchange Centre (Sittdec).

He said the bilateral payments arrangements had proved its worth in facilitating and promoting trade.

As an example, Malaysia's volume of trade had increased by 1.50 per cent over the past three years, adding that 15 countries had signed such agreements with Malaysia.

A stronger South-South co-operation would reduce trade dependency on the North, he said.

The Prime Minister also urged members to speak with one voice at multilateral fora, such as the United Nations and Bretton Wood organisations.

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