

# Take control,

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By K.P. Waran

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — The time is right for developing countries to take control of their destiny rather than to continue submitting to the dictates of others, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

“He said he was confident that specific niches could be found to integrate the economies of developing countries for this purpose.

He said the South would have to look within itself for the creativity and potential that could be harnessed to accelerate development and growth.

“It is a matter of survival and self-preservation that the South as a group should manage their economies in a manner that creates greater complementarities in production, trade and investment.

“The vast diversity in the levels of development of our countries must be viewed as an opportunity to establish better links.”

At the opening of the G-15 expert group meeting on exchange of information on national economic policies of member countries here, Dr Mahathir said developing countries should continuously explore opportunities to establish better links.

He said the focus of the South movement should shift from the dependence of the North for aid, technology transfer and management expertise to self-help strategies.

Efforts should be made by member countries to enhance South-South relations, he said, adding the “marginalisation” of some of the South countries was the result of not only the action of others but the failure to develop such links.

He said there was much the South countries could

offer to each other in terms of trade and investment opportunities since their economies constituted 25 per cent of global trade.

Dr Mahathir said that while the developed countries were facing a bleak economic situation, East Asia and Southeast Asia recorded impressive growth rates, thus making the Asia-Pacific region the most dynamic in the world.

This offered hope for other developing economies, he said.

“Perhaps East Asia can provide the leadership to champion free trade or open regionalism. Open regionalism will be a great contributor to the open global trading system.

“The proposed East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC) will help bring about this very open East Asia.”

Thirty senior economic planners from Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Mexico, Nigeria, Peru, Senegal, Venezuela, Zimbabwe and Malaysia are taking part in the three-day seminar. It is also attended by 32 observers from member countries of the G-77.

Dr Mahathir said developing countries' imports totalled about US\$800 billion (RM2 trillion) while the total population of G-15 member countries constituted a market potential of 1.6 billion consumers.

He said that although developing countries produced similar goods and therefore were competitors to each other, there were also many other items which they could trade in with each other and there were opportunities for collaboration with countries

# South urged

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# Political, macro-economic stability vital

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which were technologically more advanced.

He said the strengths of the developing countries could form a useful base for greater trading, investment and other economic linkages in the near future if the countries were willing to get together more often to talk and identify areas of mutual benefit and act on them.

"To nurture such linkages all the nations of the South must put their economies on a sound footing. Political and macro-economic stability is a *sine qua non* for development.

"Such stability will facilitate not only the retention of domestic savings and investments but also attract the inflow of foreign investments. It encourages long-term ventures and commitments which propel

sustainable growth.

"Without such predictable stability, economic and social pursuits will focus on speculative activities which produce no long-term benefits.

"It is this realisation that has motivated the establishment of the G-15 expert group meeting for the exchange of information on national economic policies of member countries."

He hoped the meeting would "jump start" a series of meetings among the economic planners of G-15 countries to formulate and translate proposals into action programmes for adoption and implementation by developing countries.

"More importantly, better economic relationships can be established among G-15 countries and we will be able to chart the destiny of our nations."