

05 NOV 1996

G15-Mahathir

MAHATHIR TELLS DEVELOPING COUNTRIES TO CLOSE RANKS

By: Kuah Guan Oo

HARARE, Nov 5 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir has told the 15 members of G-15 to close ranks and re-dedicate themselves to the cause of developing countries.

"The G-15 can be relevant if we want it to be. The G-15 can provide the leadership role if we commit ourselves to that purpose," he said at the closing of the three-day summit by the outgoing chairman, President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, today.

Dr Mahathir was speaking as the incoming chairman of the six-year-old grouping which will meet next in Kuala Lumpur.

The third speaker was Prime Minister P. Patterson of Jamaica in his capacity as the G-15 chairman after Malaysia.

Dr Mahathir said the grouping that was set up to spearhead closer cooperation among Third World countries has a lot to do.

"The challenges are getting bigger and the time for us to act is getting shorter and shorter," he said.

He said they had discussed the challenges posed by a world that is changing rapidly, be it in terms of politics, economics or technology, and some people said this is the era of a "new global partnership for development".

"Is this for real, or is it a mere subterfuge for domination by those with the necessary might and resources?" he said.

The global partnership, he said, could only be played, and must be played, with due regard being paid to the handicaps as much as to level playing fields.

"Pitting midgets against giants makes nonsense of level fields," he said.

The Prime Minister also said that they might indeed be living in a world of bigger challenges and uneven opportunities.

"In fact, in the economic context, countries of the world are showing bigger gaps in term of income disparities as compared to a decade ago."

As such, he said, drastic and persistent efforts would be needed to arrest the slide among the developing countries.

Dr Mahathir said: "We see a lot of double standards and selectivity at the international level, as the dictates of domestic politics overrule justice and humanitarianism in international affairs."

At the same time, he said, they also found division and fragmentation among the developing countries.

They, however, should not despair because the potentials existed for the developing countries to exert their rights and ensure a better future for themselves.

For the G-15 for example, its Committee on Investment, Trade and Technology was the platform for economic cooperation among themselves in investment, trade exchanges and technology sharing.

Concrete programmes of action and better flow of information in these fields must be worked out and implemented, he said. -- BERNAMA

KGO CTL