

Dr M: We'll continue to co-operate with South

3 30.7.98 46
By WAN HAMIDI HAMID

MAPUTO (Mozambique): Malaysia will not give up in its efforts to co-operate with the countries of the South despite the current economic turmoil, said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The Prime Minister, who is on the last leg of his tour of Southern African states, said although Malaysia may not be able to do much at present, it will continue to look to the day when it once again invests in other countries.

"This explains why a large private sector delegation has accompanied me (to Mozambique) despite the difficulties at home.

"They want to look beyond this crisis and prepare themselves for their return to this region," he said at a state banquet hosted by Mozambique president Joachim Chissano here last night.

Dr Mahathir arrived in Mozambique yesterday for a three-day official visit, the first by a Malaysian Prime Minister.

Dr Mahathir, accompanied by his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, was met on arrival by Chissano at the Maputo International Airport.

In his speech, Dr Mahathir said although Malaysia was keen to participate in the reconstruction of Mozambique, it did not have the means to do so.

He said Malaysia's sustained annual growth of 8% had been replaced by a contraction of 1.8% while the ringgit had devalued by 70% and stock market capitalisation reduced to a third of its former strength.

"The so-called market forces now want to determine who should lead our country but we are not about to give up. We still feel a need to co-operate with countries of the South," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said it was important for the private sector of both countries to be familiar with each other and to know the local laws, regulations and conduct of business.