

01 AUG 1998

Mahathir-Africa

NEW GENERATION OF CARING AFRICAN LEADERS HAVE EMERGED, SAYS PM

SEPANG, Aug 1 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today a new generation of African leaders have emerged and they are more focused on the economic development of their countries and their people.

Dr Mahathir said during the recent Southern Africa International Dialogue (SAID) in Namibia, he found the leaders were different from before and they were not power-hungry dictators who were only interested in enriching themselves.

"This is a new generation of African leaders who are more focused on the economic development of their countries and their people," he told reporters on his return from a visit to South Africa, Namibia and Mozambique.

Dr Mahathir had addressed the dialogue on "Global Cooperative Governance" and also spoke on the Asian currency crisis. The dialogue was attended by 14 African nations.

Dr Mahathir said that they were very impressed with the approach adopted by Malaysia through "smart partnership".

He also took the opportunity to explain measures taken by Malaysia to overcome the problem of disparity between the Bumiputeras and non-Bumiputeras.

Dr Mahathir said the West was not helping African developing nations and seemed more concerned with issues like freedom, more transparency, more open economy and problems in countries like Angola and Sierra Leone.

"They can only say that this government is not good and that government is not good and never recognise the change in the attitude of African leaders who are now focused on the economic development of their countries and their people," said Dr Mahathir.

"And if they see there are opportunities to enrich themselves in Africa, they will do so...for instance attacking South Africa even though it is not all that rich," he said referring to the recent attack on the South African rand which dropped 30 per cent in recent weeks.

Dr Mahathir said that the depreciation of the rand had resulted in neighbouring countries having to devalue their currency to enable them to compete with South Africa.

"So, the developing countries face very serious problems and they feel that they have many things in common with us and they look with fear at what is happening in Southeast Asia and East Asia," he said.

-- BERNAMA

MAM TCL RM