

# Dr M: Give developing nations a voice

Bt 10 JUN 2000

TOKYO, Fri: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today there is a need to give developing countries a voice at the Group of Eight (G-8) rich nations' meetings.

"I mentioned the need to give the developing countries a voice. You know, these very exclusive club is fine if what they decide doesn't affect other people but what they decide affects us," he said.

Dr Mahathir was commenting on today's meeting of Asean leaders with Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori at his official residence here.

The Prime Minister said this at the end of a Keio University and Mainichi newspaper interview. The session was conducted mainly by Japan's "Mr Yen", Prof Dr Eisuke Sakakibara.

G-8 leaders are expected to meet in Japan in July. The group is made up of Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the US and Russia.

The one-hour meeting of Asean leaders centred on next month's Okinawa Summit of G-8 nations. The G-8 summit was last held in Asia seven years ago.

Dr Mahathir said devel-

oping nations should be given a chance to explain its views to the rich nations.

"So give us a voice ... we don't want to sit around at the same table but if you talk about something that has some effect on us, please give us a chance to give our views.

"We have suffered a lot in Malaysia. You know our debt went up about two and a half times because of the Plaza Accord," Dr Mahathir said.

He said the intention is to raise the price of Japanese goods but Malaysia's debt was in yen and then it has to buy Japanese goods now

at a higher price, and poor countries cannot buy anymore.

"To solve your problems, you create problems for poor countries and I think that is not right," the Prime Minister said.

Asean leaders who attended the hour-long meeting with Mori were Laotian Prime Minister Sisavath Keobounphanh, Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, Vietnamese Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Manh Cam, Thai Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai, Philippine President Joseph Estrada,

and Lt-Gen Khin Nyunt of Myanmar.

Singapore was represented by Home Affairs Minister Wong Kan Seng while Brunei was represented by Minister of Planning and Primary Resources Abdul Rahman. Also present at the meeting was Japanese Foreign Minister Yohei Kono.

Mori told the South-East Asian leaders that a new round of world trade talks should be opened soon and should take account of developing nations' interests. — Bernama, AFP