

09 JUNE 2000  
Mahathir-G8  
ASEAN LEADERS MEET MORI ON G-8 MEETING

By: Mohd Ghazemy Mahmud

TOKYO, June 9 (Bernama) -- 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, affect us," he said.

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

The prime minister said this at the end of a Keio University and Mainichi newspaper interview here. The session was mainly conducted 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, United States and Russia.

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

Dr Mahathir said developing 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 was to raise the price of Japanese goods but Malaysia's debt was in Japanese Yen and then she had to buy all the 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.

The Asean leaders at today's 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, Thail Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai, Philippine President Joseph Estrada, Myanmar's Secretary 1 of the SPDC (military leader) Lt-Gen Khin Nyunt.

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.

The Asean leaders were here to attend the funeral ceremony of the late Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi held yesterday and also to partake in the two-day Nikkei Shimbun International Conference on "The Future Of Asia" which ends today. Dr Mahathir arrived in Japan Wednesday to begin a week-long working visit.

Prime Minister Mori, during the conference dinner speech late yesterday, said: "In order to see that the perspective of other Asian countries are reflected in the discussions, we have taken advantage of every available opportunity to learn their views."

He said that he wanted the Summit to deliver a positive message with

the hope that the 21st century would be an age of greater prosperity,  
deeper peace of mind, and greater world stability for all, and that it  
would be a bright century for Asia as well.

-- BERNAMA

GM ES RM