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Dr M urges G-7, G-8 to listen to others in decision-making

Ahirudin Attan; Saiful Azhar Abdullah in London

LONDON, Thurs: Malaysia has conveyed to Britain the need for Group of Seven (G-7) and Group of Eight (G-8) member countries to consider the interest of developing economies when making decisions.

During a meeting at No. 10 Downing Street today, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad explained to British Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott why "the North should listen to the South".

"I tried to explain to the British Government that it is important for developed nations to seek the views of developing countries when they hold G-7 and G-8 summits," he told Malaysian journalists.

Dr Mahathir said problems arose for developing nations when G-7 and G-8 members made decisions without considering their interests.

When G-7 decided to appreciate the yen, the Prime Minister said, the developing nations suffered because it doubled their debts.

"Therefore I explained to Prescott our problems and he agreed to convey it to British Prime Minister Tony Blair," he added.

On the South Coordinating Commission Mini Summit which ended today, Dr Mahathir said the Group of 77, which has existed since its inception in 1957 as a ministerial level platform for the developing countries, is expected to approve a new structure which will involve direct participation of the heads of governments and states at its meeting in New York next month.

At the end of the mini summit, the leaders succeeded in determining the structure of a body to administer the affairs of G-77, said Dr Mahathir.

It will not be right for Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, who presided over the closed-door meetings, to announce the outcome publicly before the governments had a chance to look at the recommendations, he added.

Dr Mahathir said what has been decided at the meeting, held over two days, would be revealed in New York.

"What we have done is merely to advise on the structure and generally, there will be a council and executive committee and we have to tell the Heads of Government," he said.

Describing the meeting as a very good one, the Prime Minister said the recommendations drafted during the mini summit were "good" and would enable the G-77 meeting to ascend to summit level.

It is learnt the four South leaders attending the meeting have adopted a report on the establishment of a South Coordinating Commission (SCC) on January 1 2001.

The SCC is conceived as a permanent body that will coordinate developing countries' position with regards to world trade and financial issues.

The commission will replace the existing South Centre in Geneva.

The meeting was also attended by Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika and Jamaican President P.J. Patterson.

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