

07/09/2000

Efforts continuing to establish South Co-ordinating Commission

Mustapha Kamil

LAST minute notice prevented full attendance of the five leaders of South countries at the group's special meeting here on Tuesday. Nevertheless, efforts were continuing to form the proposed South Co-ordinating Commission (SCC).

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who attended the meeting after a three-day hectic working visit to Chicago, said Tuesday's special meeting for the Group of 77 nations was productive.

Most of the leaders were represented by their Foreign Ministers. Dr Mahathir said they would forward the positive outcomes of the special meeting to their leaders.

The special meeting was a follow-up to the meeting by four of the five leaders in London recently. It was to assist the G-77 in facing the UN Millennium Summit in New York.

In talks on the proposed SCC, Dr Mahathir said he thought facilities from the present South Centre in Geneva should still be used, instead of a whole new set-up.

He said the meeting discussed formation of a viable structure for the SCC and holding meetings every five years.

The SCC is conceived as a permanent body - to replace the existing South Centre in Geneva - to co-ordinate developing countries' position on world trade and financial issues.

The idea of setting up the SCC was mooted at the G-77 Summit in Havana in April.

Dr Mahathir also said since the mandate of the five appointed G-77 country leaders was to expire end of this month while its work was not completed, the meeting agreed to extend the mandate given to the five leaders.

The leaders comprise, Nigerian President Olusegun Obbasanjo, Jamaican President P.J. Paterson, South African President Thabo Mbeki, Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflike and Dr Mahathir.

Meanwhile, Bernama reports that Dr Mahathir had earlier called on Cuban President Fidel Castro at the Cuban Permanent Representative's office in New York.

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