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G7, G8 need to seek developing nations' views, Britain told

Ahirudin Attan; Saiful Azhar Abdullah in London

MALAYSIA has conveyed to Britain the need for G7 and G8 member countries to consider the interests of developing economies in making decisions.

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

Dr Mahathir told the British Government the importance of having formal meetings between heads of government of G7 and G8 to listen to the needs of the developing economies.

"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 G7 and G8 summits," he told Malaysian journalists.

Dr Mahathir said problems arose for developing nations when G7 and G8 members made decisions without considering their interests.

When G7 decided to appreciate the yen, he 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."

On the South Co-ordinating Commission Mini Summit which ended yesterday, Dr Mahathir said the Group of 77, which had existed since its inception in 1957 as a ministerial level platform for developing countries, was expected to approve a new structure which would involve direct participation of the heads of government and state 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 G77, said Dr Mahathir.

"It will not be right for Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, who presided over the closed-door meetings, to announce the outcome of the meeting publicly before the heads of government had a chance to look at the recommendations," added the Prime Minister.

Dr Mahathir said what had been decided at the meeting, held over two days since yesterday, would only 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, Dr Mahathir said the recommendations drafted at the mini summit were good and would enable the meeting of G77, which so far existed at the Foreign Minister's level, to ascend to level of heads of government.

However, it is learnt the four South leaders attending the meeting had adopted a report on the establishment of a South Co-ordinating Commission on Jan 1, 2001.

The SCC is conceived as a permanent body that will co-ordinate developing countries' position with regard 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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