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Mahathir, South leaders likely to adopt report on SCC

Ahirudin Attan in London

DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and three other South leaders are likely to adopt today 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 regards to world trade and financial issues.

The Prime Minister is expected to be appointed to the board of the SCC.

The commission will replace the existing South Centre in Geneva.

The meeting in London yesterday and today is being presided by Nigerian President Olusegun Obbasanjo and attended by Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, Jamaican President P.J. Patterson and Dr Mahathir.

The fifth member of this "mini summit", President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, is not expected to make it for the meeting.

Dr Mahathir arrived here from Maputo on Tuesday night after attending the Southern Africa International Dialogue in Mozambique.

Datuk Abdul Kadir Mohamed, the Foreign Ministry's secretary-general, said the four leaders hoped to present the report they would endorse today to the G-77 leaders during the Millennium Summit in New York next month.

Once endorsed by the G-77 leaders, the South is expected to have a more co-ordinated stand on issues, especially those which require negotiations with the North.

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

The G-77 leaders were concerned about how divided developing countries had been in several crucial issues concerning international trade and finance.

For example, the 133 members of the G-77 could not agree on whether the South should pursue a new round of trade talks at the World Trade Organisation.

Sir Shridath Ramphal, a former secretary-general of the Commonwealth, is tipped to be the first chairman, or co-ordinator, of the SCC.

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