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PM, leaders likely to adopt SCC report

Ahirudin Attan in London

LONDON, Wed: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and three other South leaders are likely to adopt a report tomorrow 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 Prime Minister is expected to be appointed to its board of the Commission which will replace the existing South Centre in Geneva.

The meeting in London today and tomorrow are being presided by Nigerian President Olusegun Obba sanjo and attended by Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, Jamaican President P.J. Patterson and Dr Mahathir.

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

Dr Mahathir arrived here last night after attending the Southern Africa International Dialogue in Maputo, Mozambique.

Datuk Abdul Kadir Mohamed, the Foreign Ministry's secretary-general, said the four leaders hope to present the report they are going to endorse tomorrow to the Group of 77 (G-77) leaders during the Millennium Summit in New York next month.

Once endorsed by G-77, South countries are expected to have a more coordinated 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 grouping's leaders were concerned about how divided developing countries have been on 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 (WTO).

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

The chairpersons of the various South groupings, including Asean, Non-Aligned Movement and G-15, are likely to sit on the SCC Board.

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