

PM urges global action on poverty

(P) Mahathir - overseas trips

NST - 6 OCT 1988

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Even if we have to spend billions on weapons, on preserving the beauty of nature, the trees and the forests, the rare insect species, and the other things that we claim will enhance the quality of our life, we have no excuse in this day and age to permit such misery to befall millions of fellow humans.

NEW YORK, Wed. — Moved by a compelling pity for the world's poor, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today suggested that an international agency, manned by full-time staff, be set up to eradicate poverty.

The Prime Minister said poverty cannot be wiped out by one nation alone and through ad-hoc charitable efforts. It has to be done through a concerted effort of all caring nations and individuals, he said in his address at the 43rd UN General Assembly here.

Dr Mahathir said: "We are always concerned when there is extreme disparity between rich and poor within any country. But in some countries, there is no disparity. Everyone is just poor.

"If we are asked to imagine what poverty is like in some poor nations, we will find it extremely difficult to picture it accurately."

"But we need not imagine. Today we see, in colourful detail accompanied by sound and motion, the extent and horror of human poverty.

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He added that the response of millions of ordinary people to the appeals for aid to the suffering poor is laudable, but the task is too big for such charitable efforts.

The answer would lie in a full-time and fully-manned authority to fight the scourge of poverty.

This civilisation will be condemned by posterity if we can put man on the moon but cannot give enough help to the needy on Earth at

From AHMAD A. TALIB

only a fraction of the cost, Dr Mahathir said, as he made a compassionate appeal to the world community of nations for greater understanding, sympathy and action.

The Prime Minister said inequality is the bane of human society. Democracy purportedly cherished by all, is associated with equality and equitability.

While Governments are urged to be democratic, in the affairs between nations, democracy is noticeably absent. In the community of nations, the strongest and the richest take advantage of the weak and the poor. There is no equality there, he said.

Asked to elaborate on his proposal, Dr Mahathir said the mechanics may involve setting up a new agency within the UN, or consolidating existing UN-sponsored entities involved in improving the quality of life of the world's peoples.

The Malaysian delegation will follow up the suggestion with the UN's second committee where it will be tabled for consideration.