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REQUEST DISMANTLING OF TRADE BARRIERS FOR MORE LIBERAL TRADING SYSTEM
Mahathir-barriers
From Abdul Rahman Sulaiman

DUBLIN, Sept 23 (Benama) -- ⁹² Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today industries in small countries should be prepared and be confident enough to request their respective governments to dismantle barriers in favour of free trade.

This, he said, was the only way to contribute towards a more liberal world trading system.

Speaking at a business luncheon jointly organised by the Irish Trade Board and the Confederation of Irish Industry here, the prime minister said market-access barriers, although finally erected by governments, were not actually initiated by them.

Such barriers had generally been instituted at the request of the industry themselves for their own protection.

+But for countries with small domestic markets, like Malaysia and Ireland, it would be fatal to pursue this course of action due to retaliatory response by larger markets.+

Dr Mahathir urged such countries to regard the world as their market. +To adopt an inward-looking trading policy is only to shackle their hands and limit their ability to create an economy that was vibrant and resilient,+ he said.

He said in this connection, Malaysia and Ireland whose economies were oriented to and dependent on foreign trade, shared a common interest in ensuring the healthy development of a liberal international trade regime.
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The prime minister said it was also important for smaller countries to promote the principles of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (Gatt) and do everything to ensure the successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations.

They should also do something to reverse the trend towards protectionism through trading blocs.

Expressing concern over this increasing trend, the prime minister recalled that when Malaysia first embarked on its industrialisation programme, he never thought that it would be faced with all sorts of hurdles.

At the time when the Malaysian economy was undeveloped, it never had to face the problem of market access.

+Our primary produce only had to contend with the vagaries of market supply and demand, a feature of market economy which, if we subscribe to, we have to live with.+

However, after successfully transforming its economy, Malaysia was confronted with these problems, he said.

On Asean, Dr Mahathir gave an assurance that the markets of member countries would remain open as all of them were dependent on outside trade.

He dispelled fears that the Common Effective Preferential Tariff Scheme, to be implemented from next year, was a trade bloc.

The scheme would eventually evolve into a Free Trade Area, he explained. -- Bernama

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