

Delegates praise PM's speech on EAEC concept

PENANG, Sun. — Delegates to the first Pacific Dialogue here said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad made a compelling and well-thought out case for greater global commitment on trade liberalisation in his keynote address.

"I thought his speech was well-thought out ... I enjoyed it and I learned a lot," said American Senator Sam Nunn, who is chairman of the Senate Armed Forces Committee and Senate Permanent Sub-Committee on Investigations.

Another US Senator, former astronaut John Glenn, said Dr Mahathir's explanation of the East Asia Eco-

nomie Caucus led him to believe that it would help promote a global commonwealth the Prime Minister was talking about.

Dr Mahathir held a dialogue with participants after his opening address.

Glenn said that from his understanding of the EAEC concept so far, it could represent a step towards achieving the global commonwealth that the Prime Minister spoke about in his speech if it really lived up to its promise of wanting to work with Apec and other regional groupings.

Glenn, who is chairman of the US Government Affairs Committee and the Senate

Sub-Committee on Military Readiness and Defence Infrastructure, said the Prime Minister also explained well "the greater world community that he likes to see all of us to move to".

Glenn said: "Although it is a nice objective to see the global community living in peace and prosperity and helping one another as he calls for, the steps towards achieving it are very complex.

"It will not only have to involve all the countries and Governments in the world but each country has also got to arrange its own

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Dr M's logic indisputable, says delegate

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way of how to get there."

Elaborating further on EAEC, he said Dr Mahathir saw it as a grouping of nations moving towards greater global commitment. But, he added: "How that plays out still remains to be seen."

On the element of urgency for a single global economic system which Dr Mahathir had stressed in his speech, Glenn said: "There is an element of urgency. Malaysia is developing so fast and I think he sees Malaysia as being one of the leaders, properly so, in this importantly developing part of the world."

Duane D. "Buzz" Fitzgerald, president and chief executive officer of the Bath Iron Works Corporation, said the speech was very compelling.

He said Dr Mahathir was "extremely persuasive" and he described the logic of the Prime Minister's argument as "indisputable".

Franklin L. Lavin execu-

tive director of the Asia Pacific Policy Centre, one of the organisers of the Pacific Dialogue, said the Prime Minister was "absolutely right" in stressing that the world needed to be focused and move rapidly for trade liberalisation.

"The protectionist pressures are such that if the political leadership around the world does not emphasise trade liberalisation, unfortunately, the natural tendency is to backslide and become more protectionist.

"He is doing everybody a great service that we have to find ways to move up and open the way for trade liberalisation."

On the current direction the world is taking in trade, he said: "It is increasingly open but there is no question that there will always be protectionist pressures, there are always interest groups, someone who says let's slow down and let's reverse. It always requires political leadership."

However, he said the commitment of Asean countries towards greater trade liberalisation by moving ahead the schedule and the success of the Uruguay Round was a "very positive development".

Meanwhile, T. Nakamura, the Japanese Ambassador to Malaysia, one of the observers of the event, hailed the Prime Minister's speech as an important catalyst, especially in promoting trade liberalisation and towards the formation of a global commonwealth.

He also expressed gratitude to the Prime Minister for wanting to continue and preserve Malaysia's good relations with Japan.

He added: "I have always looked forward to listening to the speech of your Prime Minister as he always seems to come up with some very good ideas and suggestions not just for the people of your country but for the international community."