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COUNTER DOMINATION BY BIG POWERS, MAHATHIR TELLS WEAK AND POOR NATIONS

KUALA LUMPUR, July 24 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed said tonight the weak and poor nations must fight tooth and nail against losing their independence and domination by powerful countries.

Painting a gloomy picture of globalisation, he said a globalised world was not going to be a very democratic and was going to belong to the powerful dominant countries.

The powerful countries would impose their will on the rest which might not be better off than when they were colonies of the rich, he added.

"This is a gloomy prediction. It is pessimistic. It does not contain much hope for the weak and the poor, But, unfortunately, it is entirely possible," he said at the inaugural lecture of the Prime Ministers of Malaysia Fellowship here. The theme of the lecture was "Globalisation: What it means to small nations."

Dr Mahathir said globalisation, as interpreted by developed countries, meant the breakdown of boundaries as barriers to economic exploitation.

Every country rich or poor, developed or developing, would have access to every other country; it would be a borderless world, the whole of planet Earth would be one nation and everyone would be earthlings, not subjects of countries or nations.

"But, if there is only one global entity, there cannot be nations," he said, adding: "Certainly there cannot be independence of nations.

"The newly independent nations will disappear together with the old nations, including of course the former imperial or colonial powers. Everyone would be equal, citizens of the globe. But will they be truly equal."

Dr Mahathir said after more than 30 years of "independence," the former colonies of the West had found out the emptiness of the independence they won.

"They have found that their politics, their economy, their social and behavioural systems are all under the control, directly or indirectly, of the old colonial masters and the great powers," he added.

In the bipolar world of the Cold War period, developing countries at least had the option of switching allegiance even though allegiance often amounted to acceptance of hegemony.

He said: "In a unipolar world they have lost even the choice to submit. They have to submit to the successful superpower and its cohorts whether they like it or not."

With that kind of experience, Dr Mahathir said, it was silly to think that globalisation would mean more independence and equitability for them.

He also referred to attempts by Western developed countries to link trade with alleged human rights violations, child labour and environmental degradation.

It was clear that the developed countries wished to use the World Trade Organisation to impose conditions on developing countries which would result, not in improving human rights, labour practices or greater care for the environment but in stunting their growth and consequently suffering for their people.

"Already the developed West have shown that they are not interested in these matters in themselves, but are interested in these only in those countries which pose a threat to the West," he said.

If countries were absolutely poor and produced nothing which constituted a threat to the developed countries of the West, the plight of their people in terms of human rights, labour practices or the environment did not matter at all.

"But if these countries are competing with the West in any way, then their records are scrutinised and threats issued," he said. "The net effect is to prevent the development of these countries and their emergence as newly industrialising economies."

He added that countries of the West were unwilling to give up the good life as they had imagine their way of life to be, they wanted to reduce competition from others through converting their competitors to their culture, their way of life.

"This they claim will result in their so-called level playing field in which they stand more than an even chance to regain their superiority. And so again globalisation will result in small nations remaining unable to catch up with the developed world," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the effect of economic globalisation would be the demise of small companies based in developing countries and large corporations from developed countries would take over everything.

Little players from small countries would be absorbed and would disappear while their shareholders, big players when they were in the small companies, would wield insignificant authority in the huge conglomerates.

Dr Mahathir also referred to author George Orwell's prediction of Big Brother making its presence in 1984.

"1984 has passed and gone. Big Brother did not make his appearance. But that does not mean that Big Brother cannot appear after 1984. The technology for global scrutiny by Big Brother is available now. It remains for those in control to make use of this technology, and 1984 will become a reality." he said. -- BERNAMA

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