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Mahathir-Values

EAST AND WEST CAN CREATE A SINGLE GLOBAL CIVILISATION, SAYS PM

By: Salmy Hashim

WASHINGTON, May 21 (Bernama) -- Eastern and Western values, though different, can reach an understanding and work towards the creation of a "single global civilisation" that weds the good and rejects the bad, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

In delivering his speech on the "Asian Values Debate" at the 29th International General Meeting of the Pacific Basin Economic Council (PBECC) here, Dr Mahathir invited both East and West to enjoy a "feast of civilisations where we each take the best that all of us have to offer."

The Prime Minister said the debate was probably brought about by the fear that the Asian success would lead to Asian self-assertion, but the West "have no right to ram their preferences down everyone's throat."

The Europeans, for instance, were fond of imposing sanctions on Asian nations that failed to meet their standards or norms.

However, he said, "no Asian parliament I am aware of has passed a single resolution calling on its government to take steps should a European country not reform itself...if any Asian parliament were to so act, the West would regard them as mad."

He asserted that Asia would no longer yield to such demands. "For much of Asia is now no longer weak...in material or mental terms."

To demonstrate the difference between Asian and American values, Dr Mahathir cited a study done by David Hitchcock, former US director of East Asian and Pacific Affairs of the US Information Agency, who found that while Asians gave priority to an orderly society, the Americans placed freedom of expression and personal freedom at the top of their priority list.

The Prime Minister, however, conceded that "Asian values" were far from perfect because in many parts of Asia there were excessive materialism, excessive anti-materialism, extremist spiritualism and the ethics of fatalism.

Uncaring societies who have no regard for the environment, the wildlife, the handicapped and the disadvantaged also abound in Asia, he said.

The West, on the other hand, had its own problems such as drug addiction, illegitimate children, and people on welfare.

In calling for "mutual cultural enrichment," Dr Mahathir agreed that Asia had learned a great deal from the West, and should continue to learn from Africa and Latin America to get "the best that our own histories and cultures have to offer."

In the meantime, the Prime Minister also urged Asian nations to champion democracy, the market system and to respect human rights for all.

-- BERNAMA

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