

12 DEC 1997

Asean-Thanat

BE AWARE OF DANGERS POSED BY GLOBALISATION, ASEAN TOLD

By: E. Sivabalan

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 12 (Bernama) -- As Asean leaders gather here next week for their annual informal summit, a founding father of the grouping has warned them to be aware of the dangers in the coming years of "a new feudal system" being created by the Americans to "legislate for the whole world".

" It's a new world hegemony system coming to us if we are not careful enough to protect and defend ourselves," said Tun Dr Thanat Khoman, one of the only two living signatories of the Bangkok Declaration which established the Association of Southeast Asian Nations or Asean in 1967.

The other signatory is former Singapore Foreign Minister S. Rajaratnam.

" We have to be careful with all these globalisation, the World Wide Web, Internet, Information Technology... all these are the complements and tenets of the new feudal system," he told Bernama in an interview in Bangkok recently.

He was interviewed for the Asean special pictorial book entitled "ASEAN: One Region One Vision" to be launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad here on Monday in conjunction with the grouping's 30th anniversary. The book was produced by BERNAMA.

Dr Thanat's strong remarks came following the statement by US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright when she took office that "Americans should not be shy in wearing the mantle of leadership."

He said the key word in her statement which was "leadership", meant that "they (US) will be the leader."

" They will have the feudal system seated at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington D.C.," he said referring to the White House.

Dr Thanat, a former Thai Foreign Minister, said the US Congress would "legislate for the whole world and not merely for the United States.

" And they are trying to forge an organisation called WASP -- White Anglo-Saxon President," he said.

He said the new system might not be exactly similar to the old colonial system "but the meaning and the implication will be feudalistic and hegemonistic."

Citing the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec), Dr Thanat said the powerful nations like the US and Japan were trying to wrest control of the region from the members of the grouping.

" Now, Japan has signed an agreement of alliance with the US. So, Japan will become a crony of the US," he said.

To a question on human rights, he said the worst violators of human rights are the colonial powers.

" Why? Because they deprived people of their fundamental basic rights, the right to be free," he said.

On the positive side, Dr Thanat said the US had done many good things which " we are willing to recognise."

" But most of the things they did actually served their own national interests as much as the interests of others. And the Americans have the tendency to portray themselves as moralists, as an example of morality and human rights," he said.

On Asean, he said, among its weaknesses was that the grouping during its initial years had too many meetings of little importance.

He said the meetings that would be successful must be of a higher level involving senior officials of member countries.

" I think we can achieve more rather than leaving it to the less senior officials," he said.

He also spoke on the use of English among Asean countries, the decline in family values and his retirement. -- BERNAMA

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