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Mahathir-pressure

DR MAHATHIR:DON'T PRESSURE US

KUALA LUMPUR, April 11 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Malaysia resents anyone or any country "trying to put pressure on us for doing certain things which they think is bad."

At a dialogue with British corporate figures here, he said Malaysia believed in constructive measures than applying pressure to resolve international problems.

"This is our approach and I think our approach is much more constructive than, every now and then, shouting we are going to apply sanction. I think that is a very bad way of trying to influence other countries," he said.

The dialogue followed Dr Mahathir's opening of the joint meeting of the British-Malaysia Society and Malaysia-British Society at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) here.

But, he said, very often Malaysia's approach was not appreciated by Europeans and Americans alike as they felt the only way to get people to behave is "to whack them at the bottom".

Dr Mahathir said: "We think that by talking to people we can achieve better result. You could be right or we could be wrong. People resent adding pressure, what always happen is that they get to fight back and they do not consider whether they are in the right or wrong."

He said Malaysia's successes had helped towards changing the attitudes of some countries.

This, he believed, had contributed to the progress of some former communist countries in Southeast Asia and even some in Africa which were willing to seek Malaysia's assistance.

"I think that it is far better if we talk to them. Maybe we have too much value to ourselves, but we think we have been able to influence quite a considerable number of countries over the years," he said.

He said some former communist countries in the region, which found it difficult to understand the workings of free trade economy, went to Europe or America to see the system and were convinced that it would not work.

But, as these countries have their own way of thinking, they felt more comfortable and convinced that the free trade system could work if they came to Malaysia.

"They are more willing to listen to us and thus come to Malaysia than go to Britian. That is how we approach them as Malaysia has a very big program which has helped many developing countries from the Pacific Islands to Africa," he said.

He said while here they were exposed to what was happening in Malaysia, including the working of a market economy, the kind of economic planning and the way the government went about in correcting disparity between the communities.

Dr Mahathir said: "We even help them in administration, how to administer democracy, how to administer a free market economy and how to provide a bigger framework for investment by foreign investors."

All these, he said, were done to convince the former communist countries that market economoy and democracy would not spoil them but instead could help them progress.

"Because of that, many former communist countries have adopted the free market economy although they have not yet adopted democracy. And we think that when the time comes, they will accept it because democracy has not

harmed us," he said.

Dr Mahathir also criticised the Western media, especially the British press, for highlighting only the negative aspects of Malaysia but failing to report the positive ones.

"I think there is a need for the British media to come here and see what we are doing as they should learn to understand the sensitivity of others and help in contributing towards better relations between peoples of the two countries," he said. -- BERNAMA

ZAB RN