

30/08/1997

Time to evaluate impact of globalisation and privatisation

G. Sivalingam

TWO of the more momentous decisions of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad have been the Privatisation and Malaysia Incorporated Policy of 1983, and the Promotion of Investment Act of 1986.

These two policies set in motion the forces of globalisation and privatisation that further integrated the Malaysian economy with the world economy.

As a result Malaysia has seen an unprecedented high rate of economic growth.

After about a decade of massive inflows of global capital and investments, it is timely to stop to take a deeper look at the impact of globalisation and privatisation because these two complementary forces are expected to play a profound role in shaping the Malaysian economy and society as Malaysia mobilises its resources towards achieving Vision 2020.

It is, therefore, timely that a Conference on Globalisation and Privatisation and its impact on the Malaysian economy is held with the participation of some of the world's leading experts in the field and Malaysia's top policy planners and implementors.

Universiti Malaya has teamed up with America's most prestigious university - the Harvard University - to bring the one-day conference and a nine-day workshop to Malaysians. The conference and workshop will be held in Langkawi from Oct 27.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, in his keynote address to conference participants, will discuss the impact of globalisation and privatisation on the Malaysian economy. He will no doubt focus his favourite theme, that is the marginalised and oppressed groups and the need to integrate them into the mainstream of an expanding and affluent economy and society. The effect of privatisation in creating a market economy, levelling the playing field and facilitating a more transparent political, administrative and economic system will not miss his attention.

Professor Jefferey D. Sachs, the architect of Russia's economic reforms and "Poland's Jump to the Market Economy" and the economist who cured Bolivia's hyper inflation illness and, according to Time magazine, one of the world's most influential economists, will talk on "Asia in the Year 2020". Having just completed a US\$1 million research project on the "Future of Asia" for the Asian Development Bank, Sachs is eminently qualified to talk on this subject.

As Malaysia moves from the first stage of labour-intensive export-led growth to high-tech growth there are several policy options that face emerging economies like Malaysia. Malaysia's top policy planners have discussed these options on a continuous basis.

Professor John Thomas of Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government is expected to talk on Malaysian investment overseas and its long-run effects on the Malaysian economy.

Thomas will be joined by one of the world's experts in the field of privatisation of utilities and infrastructure: Professor E. Sheshinski of Harvard University's international arm, the Harvard Institute for International Development. He will trace the development of global linkages in privatising infrastructure, telecommunications and utilities. He will pay particular attention to privatised monopolies and regulatory reform.

Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak will talk on the

globalisation and privatisation of higher education and the development of human resources to enable Malaysia to meet challenges and be ahead in the Information Age.

Dr Mahathir's Vision 2020 is gradually being transformed into reality by the choice of correct policies. The latest World Development Report (published by the World Bank) has credited a large portion of East Asia's growth to good governance.

The importance of values and the safety net necessary to protect the disadvantaged as a result of increased competitiveness as well as the facilitating role of Islam in promoting transparency and a rules-based system of operations will be one of the highlights of the conference.

Professor Datuk Dr Osman Bakar, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Universiti Malaya and a leading expert on Islam and development, will discuss the role of Islam in accelerating further integration of the Malaysian economy with an increasingly competitive and achievement-oriented global economy.

For details on the conference and workshop, contact the Universiti Malaya's Consulting Unit at Fax No: 603-7587061.