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Adjust to changes, PM tells youths

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - The Prime Minister tonight called on youths to adjust to changes brought about by the approaching new millennium but reminded them to carefully examine the ideology behind globalisation before it was too late.

Making reference to the recent attacks on the currencies and the stock markets which had impoverished several Asian countries, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said if society did not examine from now the new "religion" that was being foisted on the world, very soon it would be forbidden to do so.

He said changes were not always good and unless society skilfully evaluated them, it might regress instead of progressing.

"For nearly 100 years, a good part of the world accepted socialism and communism as the answer to the inequities in human society.

"It wasn't easy to counter and discard a universally accepted ideology.

"Millions had to die and millions more suffered poverty and deprivation because those with vested interest in the ideology did not allow criticism or contrary ideas to flower," Dr Mahathir said at the opening of the Commonwealth Youth Ministers' Meeting at the Kuala Lumpur Hilton.

His speech was read by Youth and Sports Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

Dr Mahathir said globalisation, which had become a catchword and fashionable to mouth, meant that countries and nation States had become passe.

"In the globalised world, global players will dominate. They will determine the direction and the progress of the world. They will brush aside governments, whether elected or otherwise," he said.

This, Dr Mahathir said, was already happening as governments were now being disciplined and even deposed by market forces - the name given to those who controlled international capital.

"The cost in human misery is irrelevant. The important thing is that market forces as an element of globalisation, must not be obstructed."

On the other hand, Dr Mahathir said globalisation could also be good if all the capital and technology belonged to the world and not to any particular country.

"Then, all the profits and the royalties will accrue to every world citizen. Unfortunately, the present interpretation of globalisation does not accept this."

Dr Mahathir said it could not be denied that recent attacks on a nation's currency and the free movement of vast sums of money across borders had resulted in more than 20 million workers, executives and professionals losing their jobs.

"In countries too poor to have unemployment benefits, that means no money to buy food, medicine or milk for the children and eventually clothing and shelter."

Dr Mahathir also said that history had proved that the societies which were prepared to change and to adjust to changes were the most successful ones, while the conservatives become ossified.

"In the tussle between the conservatives and the progressives, almost invariably the progressives, the ones who accept and make use of changes, win."

Dr Mahathir said as the new millennium approached, the variety of

changes and the speed with which changes took place in every field had increased.

"Accepting and adjusting become more difficult and many will be sidelined and left behind."

Dr Mahathir also said developing countries which had the right formula for achieving economic development should share their winning formula with everyone.

"We should share it with everyone for sharing is smart. It is smart because the prosperity and success of one country benefits other countries."

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