

29 MAR 1998

Mahathir-Colonialism

DR MAHATHIR IS WORRIED ABOUT NEW COLONIALISM BY WESTERN POWERS

KUALA LUMPUR, March 29 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today voiced his concern over a new colonial trend against developing nations by western countries using the currency as a weapon to impoverish them.

The prime minister said what was happening now was that foreigners were trying to determine the leaders and the policies of developing nations.

"The foreigners want to decide on how we trade, meaning that we lose our independence," he told reporters after launching the Malaysian North Pole Free Fall Expedition at the Royal Malaysian Air Force base, here.

"Whether our method is good or not is another matter, but if we say that an independent country with a government elected by the people is not allowed to do certain things, then the election of the government is meaningless...and if we order that government and decide who should be its leaders, then there is no independence," he said.

Asked whether Malaysia had been pressured into signing the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, Dr Mahathir replied: "No, not yet."

"But I'm not so sure, they come again and again, if one way does not work, they find another," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that at one time the West had tried to link trade and environment with human rights but Malaysia had resisted.

However, they returned using the currency as an effective weapon because depreciating a country's currency could impoverish it and force it to grovel, he said.

"When we grovel, conditions are imposed," he said, adding that the currency was indirectly used as weapon to "end our freedom". -- BERNAMA

ARA JK