

09 SEP 1998

Mahathir-Reform

MALAYSIA MUST CARRY OUT OWN FINANCIAL REFORM, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 9 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysia must undertake its own financial reform since its appeal to the world community to regulate and bring order to the financial market has gone unheeded.

"Malaysia cannot wait. Malaysia has chosen to become a heretic...if you like.

"If the international community cannot change, then Malaysia must undertake its own reform," Dr Mahathir said in an article he wrote for the Time magazine published in its Sept 14 issue.

Dr Mahathir said although Malaysia might fail in its reform efforts, "but we are going to do our damndest to succeed, even if all the forces of the rich and the powerful are aligned against us. God willing, we will succeed".

The prime minister, who is also the First Finance Minister, said governments were being told that the only system allowed was that of capitalist free markets, of globalisation.

"Everyone must accept this system or be considered a heretic and punished accordingly. Not the slightest modification is allowed," he said.

Dr Mahathir said for the capitalist free markets, it did not matter if the unfettered and unregulated free market had destroyed the economies of the whole regions.

"The important thing is that the system is upheld," he said.

He said there was a time when Christians believed in killing Christian non-conformists, Muslims and Jews.

It went on for 300 years before it dawned upon them that what they were doing was not Christian at all, he said.

Dr Mahathir said many ideologies took decades, even centuries to be acknowledged as wrong.

"So the question must be asked: How long before we reject the infallibility of the free-market dogmas," he said.

He said some were already timidly criticising the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the speculators, the capital flows across borders and the right of the self-appointed market forces to discipline elected governments.

"Can we wait 300 years? The damage is already extensive," he said, adding that it would take decades to restore the economies.

"Should we fiddle?" he asked.

Dr Mahathir said the currency turmoil that hit Southeast Asian countries in mid-1997 was initially expected to last only a few months.

But more than a year down the road, far from being resolved, the turmoil had spread throughout the world, he said.

"No one has really benefited except possibly the currency traders and share market speculators," the prime minister said.

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