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Mahathir-UN

LEAVE M'SIA ALONE TO MANAGE HERSELF, MAHATHIR TELLS UN

By: Amin Husaini Harun

NEW YORK, Sept 29 (Bernama) -- Malaysia Wednesday made a plea to the international community that she be allowed to be left alone in managing things her own way in the interest of her own people.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in making the plea said: "We will not harm others. We are not turning our backs to the world. We will continue to do our bit for world peace."

Addressing the 54th session of the United Nations General Assembly here, he said Malaysia would continue to cooperate with the rest of the world, particularly the United Nations.

He said that as much as Malaysia accepted criticisms, warranted and unwarranted, she hoped others would also tolerate her criticisms of them.

"Free speech would be meaningless if criticisms can only be directed at the poor and the weak, but never at the rich and the powerful.

"In criticising others we are only exercising our right to freedom of expression," the prime minister said.

Recalling the current economic turmoil sweeping Malaysia and several Asian countries, Dr Mahathir described it as a "traumatic experience" when 42 years of hard work to develop the country was destroyed, in particular the affirmative actions to reduce enmity between the races in Malaysia.

"We have devised our own formula for recovery. With the blessings of Allah we have now turned around and we are on the road to recovery.

"But we are being pressured to abandon our currency control. We do not understand. It has done us a lot of good. It has done no harm to anybody except a few thousand rich currency manipulators," he said.

The prime minister pointed out that foreigners doing real business in Malaysia have profited much from the so-called controls.

"But we are still being urged to conform to an international financial system which has enabled the unscrupulous to destroy the wealth of many nations," he said.

He noted that no serious attempt was made to change the international financial system, although so far there was only talk about intention, but the threat of financial, economic and political destabilisation remained.

In his speech, Dr Mahathir touched on the United Nations describing it as a "helpless" body often bypassed by the big and the powerful which seemed to decide by themselves when to step in and when to step out.

Unfortunately, he said no one should expect any change for as long as the UN belonged to the Permanent Five -- United States, Russia, Britain, France and China.

The structure of the UN would continue to reflect the glorious victory of those nations 50 years ago while for the small countries, yearly speeches and various anniversary speeches would be allowed.

Dr Mahathir believed that despite at least three of the Permanent Five being vociferous advocates of democracy, there would be no democracy in the UN, the only saving grace were the agencies and their good work.

The prime minister also criticised the world body for having rather unusual principles.

Normally in order to study, report and pass an opinion or judgement on something a neutral or unbiased person would be chosen, but it was not so when it chose a person well-known for his virulent attacks against the

Malaysian judiciary to report on that institution, he said.

The prime minister said the UN conferred on the person total immunity against the laws of his country without reference to or consent of the country, the immunity apparently extended beyond his task of reporting his findings to the world body.

"He may publish his opinions, defame people and the subject of his study anywhere and everywhere. Is there no limit to a United Nations Commissioners' immunity?" he asked.

"We are told that governments must not interfere with the judiciary. Yet in this case the government is expected to instruct the judiciary not to act against this United Nations Commissioner for breaking the laws of the country," he said.

Saying he was not blaming the UN Secretary General for this, Dr Mahathir said it was the peculiar system and principles which guided the choice of the United Nations Commissioner that he found unacceptable.

"There is something not right here which the United Nations needs to look into," he said.

However, he lamented that small countries lacked a public forum to air their views freely while the Western media would distort everything that these small countries said or did.

"Again we are expected to give immunity to western journalists. They may break our laws but no legal action may be taken against them.

"I would like to point out that in Malaysia even the King and the hereditary Sultans are not above the law," Dr Mahathir said in reference to the jailing of a Canadian journalist found guilty of contempt by the Malaysian court.

The prime minister said the 21st century would not look very promising for the poor and the weak, for the aspiring tigers and dragons of Asia as everything would continue to be cooked in the West.

"Just as communism and socialism came from the West, liberal democracy, globalisation, a borderless world, deregulation, unfettered free flows of capital and their flights to quality, the disciplining of governments by the market and by currency traders and a host of other ideas all come from the West.

"And what is from the West is universal. Other values and cultures are superfluous and unnecessary. Variety is equal to being intransigent and must therefore be eliminated," he said.

Reviewing the events of the 20th century, Dr Mahathir said this century saw the most destructive wars which destroyed billions of dollars of property and killed millions of people liked the six millions Jews killed and hundreds of thousands killed by the first nuclear bombs.

He said the formation of the United Nations after the 2nd World War failed to bring lasting world peace while the destruction of the Eastern bloc failed to bring economic success to the former communist countries using the western free-market liberal democracies.

The prime minister said with the end of East-West confrontation, conflicts have increased instead of decreased.

He said the Palestinian problem was still not resolved but the sanctions and bombing of Iraq, sanctions against Libya, and the conflicts resulting from the break-up of the Soviet union went on.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF), he said, also failed to play its role and instead of helping, the IMF had destroyed further countries impoverished by currency traders and manipulators, resulting in them losing their political freedom.

"This then is the scenario in the last quarter of the 20th century ... it is useful to review the events of the 20th century so we may learn from our experience and hopefully we will know how to conduct the affairs of the 21st century.

"Malaysians are not too enchanted by the prospects we foresee in the next century. But I can assure you that we will be a responsible nation, friendly towards all who are friendly towards us and harbouring no bad intentions towards anyone," Dr Mahathir concluded.

-- BERNAMA

AHH RYN