

13/04/2000

Asia must influence globalisation: Najib

AS THE world enters a new phase of globalisation, the biggest challenge for Asian countries is to try and influence the process of globalisation, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak said.

This, he said was brought about by the financial crisis which most Asian economies had experienced over the last two years.

"Although, we are rapidly getting out of the woods, with positive record and projection of growth, we are still very much aware of the negative side of unbridled globalisation," he said in his keynote address at the opening of a two-day conference held in conjunction with the Seventh Defence Service Asia 2000 exhibition in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

With the crisis almost over, Najib said Asian countries now found themselves better prepared to face globalisation and at the same time, there is much more global awareness on the ills of this force.

"I believe we have a golden opportunity in front of us, to narrow the gap that exist between the advocates of globalisation and what I would like to refer as the recipients of globalisation.

"One of the ways to narrow this gap is to encourage greater dialogue that will lead to better understanding, among those concerned," he said.

While facing the enormous challenges of globalisation, Najib said Asian countries must also take the opportunity to strengthen Asia as a region.

"We know that regionalism is a viable option when dealing with the forces of globalisation. In this regard, Asia is still weak for it has no coherent and cohesive grouping, unlike say, the Europeans.

"I believe globalisation does provide us with the opportune moment to re-visit the ideals of regionalism and work towards this.

"It appears that Asean (Association of South-East Asian Nations), with its formal and informal linkages that go beyond South-East Asia, could well provide the core and the basis by which a super structure could grow," he said.

Thus, he said the Asean plus three - China, Japan and South Korea - formula does resemble Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's idea of an East Asian Economic caucus.

In a world of globalisation, Najib said the line that separate politics, economic and society and their implications on security is fast thinning.

Therefore, he said Asian countries must seriously consider the prudence of forming multifaceted institutions, which could well provide the basis of conflict management, conflict prevention and eventually conflict resolution.

"If this proves to be succesful, then at least in South-East Asia, we could truly leave conflicts behind us in the 20th Century.

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