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`Globalisation should be discussed at international forum'

THERE should be an international forum to discuss the concept of globalisation, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

He said the rich countries interpret it as the free movement of capital and investment, which tends to benefit only them.

"We accept that globalisation is a process we cannot keep away from us. The current interpretation of free movement of capital and investment is that the rich is getting into poor countries.

"Obviously, the poor does not have the capital and capacity to invest in rich countries. So it seems to me globalisation is one-sided because it is being initiated by the rich countries, in a way that benefits them," he told participants of the three-day conference on Central Banking and Sustainable Development in the 21st Century in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Dr Mahathir asked what the reaction of the rich nations would be if the idea of globalisation was mooted from the very poor countries.

"Of course, they (rich nations) would reject it," he said.

"Everybody must be involved in interpreting what globalisation has to be like. Everyone involved should sit down calmly and talk about what form of globalisation should emerge by taking into consideration the strengths and weaknesses of everyone.

"Obviously, poor countries cannot compete in the high-technology industry but can share the skill and knowledge of the rich and take a small share of the profits," he said.

This, he added, is in line with Malaysia's philosophy of "prospering thy neighbours" where everybody will gain from the efforts to make their neighbours rich.

"Such a philosophy will bring less problems to Malaysia, such as swelling unemployment among locals as foreign labourers start to flow into the country. On the other hand, when our neighbours are rich, we will be able to sell our products and gain more income," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said Malaysia still needs foreign investments to spur its economy, especially in the information technology (IT) and multimedia industry.

"That is one of the reasons why we created the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC)," he said.

He noted that the MSC has somewhat exceeded its target of locating some 50 world-class MSC-status companies within the 15km by 50km zone, encompassing the region from the Petronas Twin Towers and KL Tower to the Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Sepang to the south.

"There are now 37 such world-class companies and we managed to attract 370 small- and medium-sized IT-related companies, including foreign ones, to locate their operations in the corridor from the targeted 500 companies by 2003," he said.

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