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Mahathir-Commonwealth

MAHATHIR ASKS COMMONWEALTH TO DO MORE FOR MEMBERS

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 13 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today urged the Commonwealth to work together in ensuring that developing countries become full participants in international economic discussions, and in shaping and influencing the rules and laws of a globalised world.

The Prime Minister said it could also work to promote policies that help to close the digital gaps between the poor and rich countries so that knowledge could truly work for enriching everyone.

He said many developing countries were constrained by the lack of capital, institutional capacities and physical infrastructure.

"They are unable to seize fully the opportunities opened by globalisation," he said when opening the international meeting of the Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS) here.

Thus, he said the more developed members of the Commonwealth should assist developing member countries to build their capacity to deal with the new global environment.

He said the Commonwealth was no longer a grouping of ex-colonies of the British empire as it was now more a grouping of like-minded countries.

"While this is good, we must make sure that there are not so many members that we get dragged down by our weight and become unable, not only to decide on a consensual basis, but even to meet at the highest level," he said.

Dr Mahathir said to progress, the Commonwealth must continue to review its role and adapt to a fast-changing world and ensure that its members were adequately equipped to handle challenges like globalisation.

"Globalisation can bring benefits if its practices are governed by rules and regulation...without rules and internationally accepted laws, anarchy would prevail. Only the unprincipled will benefit from anarchy," he said.

Dr Mahathir said consequently, the greatest challenge was to ensure that globalisation did not benefit a few while marginalising or impoverishing a large number of developing countries.

Asked to elaborate on his speech later, Dr Mahathir told reporters that well-off Commonwealth members could do many things to assist poorer ones like providing training and equipment.

The RCS, which has its international headquarters in London, is an international non-governmental organisation working to promote knowledge of the Commonwealth.

It is supported by a worldwide membership with self-governing branches, honorary representatives and affiliated organisations in 35 countries.

-- BERNAMA

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