

30/10/2000

Nations should help each other progress

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THE English poet and writer Rudyard Kipling in The Ballad of East and West wrote:

Oh, East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet.
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgement Seat;
But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth
When two strong men stand face to face, tho' they come from the ends of
the earth.

Despite the hue and cry by world leaders over the trend towards globalisation and a borderless world, the developed nations still continue to harbour suspicions of the developing world.

Western nations seem to be frightened of losing their edge, having led the rest of the world in development, science, technology and all other critical sectors since the industrial revolution.

Having benefited from the knowledge and findings accrued from the early Eastern civilisation which travellers brought back to the West, the present Western world seems to feel that Asia and Africa have to pay a hefty price for anything that the developed nations invent or discover.

Many Asian and African nations, after years of being under the thumb of colonial rule, are slowly emerging into new economic powers although the pace of development is sometimes hampered by the reluctance of nations and organisations which control technology.

A more caring and sharing West can help bring development and progress to rest of the world and thus contribute to the eradication of poverty and bring about better living standards for all.

Instead of manufacturing millions of tonnes of weapons which are then sold to warring factions in the developing world, thus contributing to violence and anarchy, the West should share its latest technology and discoveries with the rest of the world without exacting a "pound of flesh" in return.

The developed world could also use its capacity to carry out research and studies, to delve into some of the problems faced by the Asian and African countries and offer solutions.

The West having achieved tremendous progress over the past century, including using raw materials procured cheaply from poorer nations, should seriously consider "giving something back".

The West is quick to point its finger at the developing world on the issue of the environment, blaming it for everything from damaging the ozone layer by using environmentally unfriendly products (which are mostly produced in the West) to cutting down trees and reducing oxygen levels.

Having depleted their own forests, many of the developed nations want to play guardian to the trees in the rest of the world.

Accepting that the world has much to lose if the environment is not protected, environmentally-friendly technology should be made available throughout the world at marginal cost.

Poorer nations would have little choice but to use old technologies which are deemed to be environmentally unfriendly as long as the cost of adopting new measures would mean having to fork out more money.

The West has much to gain by sharing its resources and technologies with the rest of the world as it can contribute to a more stable world with nations being able to stand on an equal footing.

The developing world too should begin earnestly drawing up programmes to

share their know-how and help each other progress and Asia should take a lead role in embarking on such co-operation through bilateral and multi-lateral means.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who has been a prime mover of closer South-South co-operation, and who has always advocated the policy of "prosper thy neighbour", on Saturday urged Asia, to take pride in its values and cultures and the countries' different ways of managing their problems.

"The more developed nations of Asia should invest in and help the less developed. An Asian Monetary Fund would be useful.

"An Asian Association for Development should be set up to enable Asian countries to interact, discuss common problems and co-operate whenever necessary," he said.

Closer co-operation in science and technology, sharing ideas on developmental models and the willingness to help each other would bring Asia closer together and take it to a new era of progress in the global scenario.

If the developed world is serious about forging closer ties with the rest of the world, it should be willing to play a bigger role in assisting other nations.

By sharing ideas, expertise and technologies, nations of the world can help create a stable, prosperous and conducive environment for the six billion people who inhabit the earth.

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