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Take charge of own destiny

AT the rate in which the explosion of information technology and changes in trading patterns are impacting nations, their economies and social framework, it is crucial that developing countries know what they want for their own good and that of future generations.

At no time is this more relevant than now to chart new directions and a new paradigm in nation-building.

They must take charge of their own destiny and not be dictated to by those with vested interests.

Many developing countries have yet to attain self-sufficiency in basic needs and if they are not to be left further behind, they will have to think long and hard on the best way to overcome this problem. The danger is in not being able to see the wood for the trees, and in repeating mistakes which have put them in the doldrums for years.

The incessant chant of globalisation has been heralded by the proponents as a process worth embracing by all and sundry. Therein lies the pitfall, for not all countries are equal. Those who champion the benefits of liberalisation and globalisation have advanced light years ahead of many developing countries.

The reality, therefore, is for the people in these countries to adopt only those elements which are crucial to their well-being.

Malaysia has trod the pebble-ridden path since the negative effects of globalisation hit us three years ago but we have emerged from the aftermath a more enlightened nation. We were mindful of the need for stability in all sectors, for stability is the cornerstone of development and growth in both the private and public sectors.

Leaders of countries in Southern Africa are looking to us to prepare themselves for the globalisation onslaught. There is much that we can do to help each other to forge ahead in a smart partnership, not just in business but in aspects of governance as well. The Southern Africa International Dialogue in Mozambique - which concluded Tuesday - is a fine example of a get-together to exchange views on how developing countries can help each other for mutual benefit.

The thrust of such a partnership is the underlying need to embrace knowledge in all frontiers. The pursuit of, and thirst for knowledge must be relentless for only when armed with wisdom is it possible to make rational choices. Having said that, it is imperative that developing nations are able to translate such knowledge into technological and social advancement for the good of their fellowmen.

As Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad points out, technological advancement "dances to a different tune" and technology widens the gap between the technological haves and have-nots. And regions with advanced technologies are best placed to further innovate.

With the might of knowledge comes a certain empowerment that will hopefully embolden the less economically advantaged to step forth into the new world with renewed vigour to better their lot.

For co-operation to be fruitful, the time-honoured tradition of transparency, accountability and consistency holds sway. There must be a constant exchange of ideas and dialogue for a successful smart partnership to prevail.

We need not wait for another round of official dialogue to expound ideas. Modern information infrastructure is there to facilitate a

beneficial exchange between friends.

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