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`Single, small organisation best'

Patrick Sennyah; Sajahan Waheed

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said a "single, small and effective" organisation was what developing countries needed to effectively react to and put up stands against developed nations.

He said at present there were too many organisations for developing countries.

And because of this, heads of Government had a taxing time attending meetings.

"The best thing we can do is to have a smaller group which is given some form of flexibility to ensure their heads of Government had sufficient time to handle other matters arising," he said.

For example, he said, to date there are groupings of 54 Muslim countries, 130 non-aligned countries and the Group of 77 which consists of about 130 countries.

"Against this huge collection of Governments, we have the powerful Group of Seven countries, which could easily make any decision which could be harmful to developing nations," he said.

Dr Mahathir said this during a dialogue at the international seminar on The Impact of Globalisation on the Islamic World: Issues and Challenges in the 21st Century here.

He was responding to a question from the floor on the effectiveness of the Group of Eight Developing Countries which comprises Malaysia, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Nigeria, Pakistan, Turkey and Bangladesh.

About 140 participants from the Organisation of Islamic Conference are attending the three-day seminar organised by the Foreign Ministry and the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations

To another question on the difficulties faced by Muslims in handling globalisation, he said Muslim countries should act in concert in the shaping of globalisation so that it could benefit them and the rest of the world.

He said Muslims could not reject globalisation outright but could influence its interpretation, regulate it, change its base and reshape it.

Dr Mahathir said unfortunately, there were many Muslims in most Muslim countries who would not do anything to save themselves, but actively try to prevent other Muslims from taking pre-emptive action by violently opposing it.

He said every time Muslim countries try to take positive measures to keep up with development with the rest of the world and to prevent themselves from being dominated by others, there would be groups of fanatics doing their best to keep Muslims backward and vulnerable in the name of Islam.

On whether Muslims would be faced with attacks on Islamic cultures when accepting globalisation, he said there was no reason for Muslims to accept globalisation and have a single set of culture and values.

"I don't see why we need to accept globalisation of cultures. Culture is what differentiates us and there should be no reason for us to be standardised."

He said if people destroyed culture, the world would be a very boring place as everyone would have only one set of cultures.

Dr Mahathir said it was important for Muslims to be aware and conscious of attempts to force the world to have a single culture.

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