

20 OCT 2001

Mahathir-Pragmatism

MAHATHIR CALLS FOR PRAGMATISM ON GLOBALISATION ISSUE

By: Mohd Kamel Othman & Ridzuan Zulkifli

SHANGHAI, Oct 20 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today there is a need for pragmatism on the globalisation issue because there had been "too much ideology" in the past.

It was important to subscribe to the principle of deducing truth from facts because the world faced a massive truth deficit when it came to the subject of globalisation, he said.

"There is simply too little fact and too much self-serving fiction. There are too many who are prepared to tell lies and to bend the truth to push through their sacred cause," he said at the Apec CEO Summit 2001 at the Pudong Shangri-La here.

Speaking on "Globalisation With Common Development", Dr Mahathir said: "There is too little common sense and straight thinking and the pragmatism shortfall is as profound as the truth deficit.

"Whether we are Americans or Armenians, Swedes or Somalis, in or out of government, we all need less group-think and more independent thinking. And we must make sure that we are not being led by the nose by well-meaning and not so well-meaning missionaries, some of whom have obviously gone through some of the world's best bible schools."

Dr Mahathir said the sacred truth that every globalisation ideologue knew not so long ago was that globalisation was always good for everyone, at all times in every way.

This was so contrary to the facts as they had been experienced by many countries in East Asia, Africa and Latin America, he said.

Not too long ago, he said, the message from the principal pulpits of capitalism and the free market, including the World Trade Organisation (WTO), was clear that there could only be winners in globalisation.

The staunch proponents of globalisation had told countries to just endure the pain a little longer and the gain must surely come.

"It is now clear beyond any doubt that in the process of globalisation, as it is now promoted, practised and pressed on us, there are big winners and big losers and the basic pattern of winners and losers is unchanging and unfair. For the winners are invariably the rich countries and the losers, the poor ones," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that among the sensible and responsible thinkers with a broad perspective, they felt that there was now a new global consensus in that if globalisation were to be sustained, there must be many more winners and fewer losers and they should be a mixture of the rich and the poor.

"There is a new emerging global consensus that the winners must not win to an obscene extent and the losers must not lose to an equally obscene extent."

Dr Mahathir said there was no doubt that the very rich and the very empowered were the biggest winners in the game of globalisation and the very rich known as HNWIs or high net worth individuals.

"I have nothing against rich people, against very rich people or against people who used to be called the filthy rich. I hope that those of us who are now not rich will one day be rich and those who are only rich today will be even richer in the days ahead," he said.

The prime minister said the World Wealth Report 2001 forecast that over the next five years, the world's HNWIs comprising some seven million people would achieve an annual 8.0 per cent growth in their investable wealth.

The extra wealth they were forecast to accumulate by 2005 would total

US\$39,000 billion which they could put into stock markets, hedge funds, currency speculation, bonds and other financial instruments.

Last year, he said, they had in their hands capital which could be used to invest in 2.7 times the total goods and services produced by the almost 280 million citizens of the US.

If the World Wealth Report 2001 was correct, he said, the amount that the world's high net worth individuals would have in 2005 for investing in stocks, hedge funds, currency speculation, bonds and other financial activities would be equivalent to four times the present GDP of the US, 36 times the present GDP of China and 82 times the present GDP of India.

"Imagine the enormous economic power of these high net worth individuals on national governments and on the international financial system. They are the biggest beneficiaries of globalisation, biggest vested interests in the freest flow and the fullest free play of global capital," he said

Dr Mahathir said that if he had a billion US dollars, he too would be very committed to a fully globalised world without any barriers and without any constraints.

Given the mountain of money and the power that came out of the almighty dollar, he asked whether was it any surprise that global capitalism was in the charge of the "Washington Consensus" of the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, WTO and the most powerful nations of the world.

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MKO RBZ SHY JK