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Need for gradual approach towards globalisation

Kamarul Yunus in Osaka

OSAKA, Thurs: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said changes in policies to adopt to the globalisation process must be implemented gradually to ensure that it is less destructive to the poor and developing countries.

He said globalisation should take into consideration the stage of development of the poor and developing countries to ensure they can compete with the developed ones.

"The conditions applied to all countries may be the same but the effects on the countries differ.

"As such, the poor and developing countries should be given time to adopt to globalisation so that the gap between the rich and poor will be reduced and the latter will be able to compete when globalisation takes place," he said at a panel discussion at the Mainichi International Symposium here.

He was asked to elaborate on his earlier speech on promoting mutual understanding between Asia and Japan, especially Kansai that Japan should not copy the policies of the West 100 per cent and should make changes gradually.

In his speech, Dr Mahathir had said the economic problems that Japan seems unable to overcome is due almost entirely to its attempt to adopt in toto Western practices and Western norms.

"The damage would not be so great and so intractable if the process had been gradual. But Japan is trying to change everything overnight.

"Change is always disruptive but instant or rapid massive change is the most disruptive of all," he said.

Dr Mahathir reiterated that the current definition of globalisation only benefits the rich and powerful countries.

"There is a level of playing field but the contestants will not be the same," he said.

For instance, he said, how can small companies and banks of developing countries compete with those of developed nations which have made profits elsewhere, whereas the locals only concentrate domestically.

He said the developed countries, although claiming themselves to be the champion of democracy, are reluctant to share their wealth and power with the poor and developing countries.

For instance, he said, international organisations such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are only represented by a few developed nations.

"It seems then globalisation is dominated by the powerful and the rich countries," he said.

Later, at a reception to commemorate the publication of his book, Reflections of Asia, by Mainichi Shimbun, Dr Mahathir proposed that the Japanese media organisations should send their journalists to South-East Asian countries so that they will get first hand news on these countries rather than rely on Western news which always paint inaccurate reports of those countries.

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