

12 FEB 2001

Mahathir-Education

PM SUGGESTS NEW CODE OF ETHICS, MORALITY FOR EDUCATION

By: Haryati Karim

KOTA KINABALU, Feb 12 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said that a new code of ethics and morality should be devised to ensure knowledge and information served the people more effectively.

He said in the mad rush towards a global information society, the question of ethics and morality should be considered.

"Unless we are taught how to handle knowledge well, knowledge will spell disaster for us," he said when opening the 36th Southeast Asia Ministers of Education Organisation (SEAMEO) Council Conference here.

Dr Mahathir said the advances made by information technology had made the location of learning centres less relevant than before.

Recorded knowledge can be accessed freely and completely from anywhere, he said.

"It is said that anybody can learn how to make a nuclear bomb by accessing the writings and records available through the Internet," said Dr Mahathir.

In spite of this, one could not stop the on-rush of the information age, the Prime Minister said.

"If we reject knowledge then we will be dominated by those who will acquire maximum knowledge. As with other globalisation aspects, the globalisation of knowledge is inevitable. We reject it at our own peril."

He also said ethics and morality should be globalised and taught as a compulsory subject to everyone.

On SEAMEO, Dr Mahathir said the organisation needed to remain dynamic and self-reliant in order to deal with the challenges posed in the 21st century.

"There is an urgent need for us to clarify and implement our strategic policies to cope with the multifaceted globalisation and the mounting demands made on our resources by advances in ICT," he said.

Dr Mahathir said SEAMEO had made great strides in meeting its goals since its formation in 1965 and its goals were still relevant.

However, the strategies that it employed to realise the goals may have to change because of changing needs and new demands, he said.

For instance, SEAMEO could play a leading role in exploring ways to restructure education systems to meet the human resource demands of an E-commerce or K-economy.

Dr Mahathir also proposed that the 14 Regional Centres of SEAMEO could look into ways of helping member countries set up their own Centres of Excellence that would cater to the unique needs of each member country.

This was because SEAMEO comprised member states that ranged across a broad socio-economic spectrum -- countries whose economies were at different stages of development.

"Therefore, the first challenge we face is to narrow the economic gap among SEAMEO member states. Unless we are able to do this, the new global forces will push us further apart," said Dr Mahathir.

He said there was also a need to understand these forces which went under the collective-term "globalisation" and how to handle it and its abuses.

"No doubt the deepening economic integration, increasing economic openness and growing economic interdependence is a good thing but it must not be done at the expense of neighbours who lack the resources to compete

in a free-for-all open market."

"Globalisation will only benefit everyone if we have equal capacity to compete," added Dr Mahathir.

SEAMEO grouping Asean countries was established to promote cooperation in education, science and culture in the region.

Its six associate member countries are Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands and New Zealand and an affiliate member -- the International Council for Open Learning and Distant Education (ICDE).

--BERNAMA

HAK AAM