

# 'Globalisation must not harm people'

Nst - 4 JUN 2007

■ By Firdaus Abdullah  
firdy@nstp.com.my

**KUALA LUMPUR, Mon.** — The people have the right to question globalisation if its implementation leads to the loss of millions of jobs worldwide, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said although globalisation could not be avoided by any nation or group, it should be reshaped to prevent discrimination and favouritism.

Dr Mahathir said among others, capital flow must be regulated to prevent the poor from being at the mercy of the rich.

"The trend towards giant corporations and banks merging and acquiring to become even bigger seems to indicate that size and strength will determine success in business.

"Everyone knows the big and rich

will dominate a globalised free market world.

Being big may contribute towards efficiency and lowered cost, but the savings may come from reducing work forces and consequently unemployment for many," he said.

Speaking at the official launch of the inaugural Union Network International-Asia Pacific Regional Conference here this morning, Dr Mahathir, who is also Finance Minister, told the 500 delegates that even if products became cheap due to efficiency, they would still be inaccessible to people who had lost their jobs in the interest of efficiency.

He urged all concerned, especially workers and their unions, to study the present interpretation of globalisation.

"We do not want to see massive unemployment in a globalised world of the giants," he said.

Speaking at a Press conference later, Dr Mahathir said workers, as well as their unions, should re-assess their position in a globalised world environment as failure to do so would result in them losing their role.

He reiterated that unemployment would rise around the globe if the tenets of globalisation, especially free flow of capital, were not corrected.

"We have to study what would happen to the majority of the work force, especially in countries where there is no unemployment benefit, when globalisation rolls in," Dr Mahathir said, adding that such problems should be deliberated at World Trade Organisation meetings.

"Today, at the WTO conference, people are prohibited (from doing so). Certain countries have strong delegations and powerful influence over other countries simply because other countries owe them money or have

been receiving aid from them.

"Negotiations should be fair and everybody should be given a hearing."

Dr Mahathir reiterated that labour issues should be given a proper hearing as they affected millions of lives.

Earlier in his speech, Dr Mahathir advised trade unions to refrain from

exerting undue pressure on employers, especially during "bad" times.

He said when unions become too powerful, they often misuse the power to constantly demand higher wages, regardless of the rising cost of goods. He told delegates that such tendencies would prove detrimental to

all when countries with cheaper cost of labour entered the arena.

Advising unions against being confrontational, Dr Mahathir said disputes and demands should be handled through negotiation and, if need be, through arbitration by third parties.