

PM: Unite in economic fight

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LANGKAWI: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the poor and developing nations should stand together to effectively overcome "economic terrorism" which is now impeding their progress.

The Prime Minister said they should stand united to collectively address the matter, adding:

"We should make our stand as a group in order to be effective. A number of people (Heads of States attending the LID) have alluded about their positive response in their speeches (to our cause in fighting economic terrorism)."

Economic terrorism is a phrase Dr Mahathir coined, in his keynote address during the opening of the sixth Langkawi International Dialogue (LID) 2002, to stress the dangers of economic oppression by the developed nation on poor and developing countries.

"Martin Khor (director of the Third World Network) gave a very good expose of what is happening in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and he mentioned that we must work together to make ourselves felt in order to have a bigger say (on issues affecting the poor nations)," he told reporters after receiving a courtesy call by Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe.

Asked on the response from countries participating in the LID 2002, Dr Mahathir said: "We don't expect immediate reaction".

"We just put up something but I am sure what I said registered in their minds and we have to follow up."

On his remarks that a country had distracted US\$200mil worth of investments from Malaysia, Dr Mahathir said he was only citing that as an example.

"Eventually, it happened. It has, of course, happened in many incidents where countries, states or municipalities made offers of free land and capital subsidies to entice investors.

"This means, of course, that developing countries have to compete with developed countries for foreign direct investments. We can compete with them but this is unfair competition. We cannot match what developed nations can offer."

On whether Malaysia benefited from LID, Dr Mahathir, who is also patron and advisor of LID 2002, said the country had benefited the most although it was not something that was planned.

"We are in the best position to make use of the knowledge gathered from the dialogues. (It taught us that) we must learn about the policies, laws and leaders of the participating countries in order to do business with each other," he said.