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MAHATHIR-PBEC

BREAK FREE FROM ANY SYSTEM TO PURSUE GROWTH, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, May 6 (Bernama) -- Governments and business communities must break free from any system or ideology in pursuing growth in the the current global scenario which is fraught with challenges, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, said today.

"In striving for growth in the challenging world of today, we must not be bound by any system or ideology to the point where we strap ourselves and become unable to do the right thing."

"Governments and business communities must be free to do what is best in order to achieve results," Dr Mahathir said in his keynote address at the 35th International General Meeting of the Pacific Basin Economic Council (PBEC) here.

They should be prepared to take one or more steps back in order to move many steps forward, he said.

"If we take a wrong turning (and) if we lose our way, then do not be afraid to admit that we have lost our way and go back to the start," he added.

Advising against blindly following the thoughts of armchair theoreticians and being influenced by sensational reports, Dr Mahathir said that governments and business communities should have more faith in their own judgments.

He said there were ways to deal with governments which fail as there were for businessmen and businesses which fail.

"Systems will not save them but understanding of the realities of life and devising ways of dealing with these realities without being constrained by orthodoxy will help and will save," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Finance Minister, said that when facing the recent Asian financial crisis, Malaysia rejected the orthodox formula and devised its own solution to the problem.

"Today, only those who are blind refuse to acknowledge that we have recovered better and faster than those who applied the recommended formula."

Dr Mahathir said that the secret of Malaysia's success in recovering has been its ability to look beyond the existing measures, mechanisms, systems, practices and rules, and to embrace the out-of-the-ordinary.

Malaysia, he said, has been using unorthodox methods frequently since independence such as luring foreign direct investment when achieving independence whereas other newly independent countries were busy nationalising foreign holdings.

Stressing that Malaysia was not anti-globalisation, Dr Mahathir admitted that foreign investments and free trade have contributed greatly to the country's growth.

However, Malaysia was concerned with the equitable sharing of the benefits of globalisation and does not want the process to be dictated or the pace be forced by any group in "our global village."

"Global trade rules should be strengthened with the aim of providing a predictable, fair and stable multilateral trading system," he said

However, the rules should not erode the competitiveness of up-and-coming countries like Malaysia or other countries, he added.

The prime minister also expressed regret that globalisation has shown signs of becoming a religion that tolerates no heresy.

"This is rather unfortunate, for globalisation, if properly interpreted

and regulated, can bring about a great deal of wealth and benefit to the world, the rich as well as the poor."

Dr Mahathir said that the important thing was to focus on the results rather than the dogma.

"If the results are good, then by all means implement it, but if the results are bad for anyone, then globalisation must be re-examined, re-interpreted and modified until the expected results are achieved. The important thing is the end not the means," he added. -- BERNAMA

MAD MKO/MR