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Mahathir-Islam

WESTERN POWERS NOT DOING ENOUGH TO WIN OVER MUSLIMS

PULAU PANGKOR, Perak, Sept 8 (Bernama) -- The Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, today hit out at Western superpowers for practically doing nothing to win the hearts and minds of Muslims and instead are bent on waging war against them (Muslims) in efforts to stamp out terrorism.

Describing this as wrong, he said "Everything is being done to alienate them (Muslims) further, to anger and frustrate them. This selfish move will only ensure that there will be a constant and probably increasing supply of recruits to terrorism."

The West had not cared to find out about the causes of terrorism and remove them while the faint voices protesting from among them were ignored, he said in his closing address at the end of the first ever Asian Global Leadership Forum, otherwise known as the Pangkor Retreat here.

It was attended by 200 people, including captains of industry, ministers, academics and economists. Also present were Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali and YTL Corporation Bhd Group Managing Director Tan Sri Francis Yeoh who chaired the closing session on "Building and shaping prosperity: Giving a human dimension to globalisation."

At a question-and-answer session later, Dr Mahathir said such a tax would not burden businesses as it would not be an imposition of new tax, adding that it could be set at a very minimal rate of between 0.5 and one percent.

"Under the double taxation agreement, you pay only at one country. Maybe, the home country can impose this tax," he suggested.

He also said that when the idea was first mooted by him at the Boao Forum for Asia on Hainan Island in China last year, there were no response as most people, especially the business community, felt they were already paying too many taxes.

Dr Mahathir said a body with representation from developing and poor countries could be set up to manage the world tax and distribute it fairly to those in need.

"It should not be like the World Bank or IMF (International Monetary Fund)...they are not free bodies. Some people might be afraid that politicians will misuse aid...so the new body can administer the fund and decide on the projects itself," he added.

He said the tax could be used to stimulate economic growth in places like Central Asia and Africa and build infrastructure facilities like roads and bridges.

"The transportation cost there (Central Asia and Africa) is very high now due to lack of infrastructure and this is making their products costly," he added.

Dr Mahathir said eventually the developed countries and multinational corporations would benefit when the poorer countries developed as the improved infrastructure facilities would create economic opportunities, jobs and buying power.

"They cannot go to war in the conventional way. They did that before against Israel but they were defeated, largely because Israel is backed by the great powers. The only way they (Muslims) can retaliate is through acts of terror, hitting out blindly at the innocent as well as the guilty."

Dr Mahathir said that if normalcy were to be restored on this planet, "the first thing that has to be done is to stop thinking of revenge, and

begin to think of justice and fair play."

He said the arrogance of power must be eliminated. Until then, there would be no prosperity for the globalised world.

On globalisation, the Prime Minister said it had to be regulated, taking into consideration the weaknesses and sensitivities of the poor countries and to ensure that the benefits resulting from globalisation like foreign direct investments (FDIs) would benefit them.

"Total freedom of inflow and outflow of capital cannot be allowed," he said, adding that manipulation of the share and currency markets must be banned.

Malaysia, he said, was critical of globalisation because it had seen the damage done by the manipulation of share prices.

Dr Mahathir also reiterated his call for a world tax on infrastructure where the money could be used exclusively for building infrastructure facilities so much needed by developing countries in order for them to develop and make them more attractive to foreign investors.

He said while some countries managed to attract FDIs, many others got nothing at all.

"It seems like the global village is the village of the rich with the poor having no share in it. It is apartheid indeed," Dr Mahathir said.

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-- BERNAMA

AR/MR SHY AAM