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LID-Mahathir (Terrorism)

WAR AGAINST TERRORISM MUST BE TOTAL, SAYS DR M

LANGKAWI, Aug 1 (Bernama) -- The war against terrorism, including economic terrorism, must be total in order to defeat it and the end results must benefit everyone, says Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

But to be able to do so, "we must first understand what is hitting us," the Prime Minister said at the Global 2002 Langkawi International Dialogue welcoming reception and opening dinner here tonight.

"Then we must work together within our own borders and between our countries. We are weak and we are client states, dependent on aid and loans. But still it is possible to take a common stand to fight off the threat.

"In this, we will not be alone. There are forces within the rich countries themselves which are with us and we can enlist their help," Dr Mahathir said.

But today, the prime minister said, economic pressure had replaced the gunboat to threaten independent countries.

Just as in the colonial era, the regions of Asia, Africa and Latin America were unable to defend themselves, today the newly-independent countries were unable to defend themselves, he said.

"They are terrified of being colonised once again through economic pressure coupled with the propaganda of the media. They are being terrorised in the same way that the terrorists are threatening the world," Dr Mahathir said.

"The whole world, especially the world most likely to be attacked by terrorists is living in a state of fear, expending hundreds of billions of dollars in futile defence and in the process preventing economic recovery," he said

He said while the rich fear the terrorists, the poor too were living in fear of the predatory rich bent upon taking over their economies and their countries.

"What I say is not an exaggeration or alarmist. Globalisation and free trade along with democracy are being touted as the saviours of the world and in particular the poor. But our experience up till now is that we are being destabilised and robbed," he said.

Dr Mahathir explained that poor countries had always relied on the natural commodities they produced in order to export and earn foreign exchange with which to buy needed industrial goods.

"But we have seen how every year we have to sell more and more of our largely depleting resources in order to buy less and less of the goods we need. We are being held to ransom because the rich countries are not entirely dependent on us for the raw materials for their industry," he said.

He said the rich countries have a choice of sources and they control the market and the prices.

"They do not really care whether we buy their products or not because their markets are mainly they themselves, the rich countries.

"Besides they invent and produce their own raw materials in order to compete with our natural products," he said, citing an example that rubber was displaced by synthetics, tin by plastics, glass, paper, aluminium and numerous other packaging materials and the genetically modified products such as soya bean oil to oust palm oil from the market.

Dr Mahathir said genetic modification was going to impoverish further

the agro-wealth-based poor countries.

The prime minister said soya bean was the perfect example because by modifying the soya so as to produce more oil per hectare the rich countries were able to reduce their prices to the same level as palm oil and other vegetable oils.

While they themselves rejected genetic modification for health reasons, they had no compunction about selling genetic modified food to developing countries, he added.

-- BERNAMA

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