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Staying united in an unequal world

A SOCIETY divided on class lines will certainly create tension and strife. Similarly, an unequal world with powerful nations exploiting the poorer ones will sow discontent and hatred and will not bring world peace. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has again reminded us of the grim realities facing the world when he warned against the dangers of the rich European countries pursuing their aggressive policies against poor developing nations.

However, even though weaker nations seem helpless they must try to protect themselves. One way is for them to unite in fighting for their cause as Dr Mahathir said at the Global 2003 Smart Partnership International Dialogue in Swaziland. That "Unity is strength" is true today as it was in the past. Collectively, Third World countries will have a bigger voice in dealing with the West but individually they will have little clout and most likely be ignored.

Globalisation is here to stay. In principle, it is supposed to create a better world because of competition, free markets and improved efficiency. But in reality globalisation is often used by the West to further their own interests. They implement globalisation in a manner that allows their companies to have unfettered access to Third World markets but the exports of emerging economies are faced with new restrictions. If they threaten the businesses and livelihood of the citizens of developed nations, rich nations can use their political and economic power to impose their will on the weaker nations. And if this fails they can deploy their superior military power to do the persuasion. The poor have to put up with these indignities.

However, even faced with such overwhelming odds, the poorer nations must not give up their fight for justice and an equitable share of the world's economic cake. Third World countries must also strive to improve their economies with sound policies and institute good governance. People in the richer West are in the minority while the majority of the world's population live in the Third World. But the majority must unite and stay united if they want to see fairness.