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Avoid EU pitfalls, warns Dr M

The Sun - 20/7/2012

BANGKOK: Asean must avoid the mistakes made by the European Union when the regional group moves to create its own community by 2015, said former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"The European Union is in trouble today because it can't work for the benefit of all members as it focuses on the rich members only. Asean must make sure the poor countries would benefit from the

community too," he said when asked his views on the formation of the Asean Community.

Mahathir was being interviewed by the Asean secretary-general Dr Surin Pitsuwan, at "A Power Dialogue" here on Wednesday night.

Asean, Mahathir said, must avoid the mistake of introducing a common currency which, he added, benefits only the rich countries but

makes the cost of living in the poor countries rise dramatically.

As for globalisation, he said, Asean must look into the interest of the poor countries too as they would not benefit from a freer market.

The globalisation comes from rich countries and we must not adopt it 100%.

"We must examine ourselves. We don't want the rich to become

richer and the poor, poorer," he said. He was speaking during the dialogue at a gala dinner in celebration of the 72nd anniversary of "Pondok Bantan" (the local Islamic religious school).

Asked where would Malaysia be now without the Vision 2020 he introduced to make the country a developed nation, Mahathir said the country would still progress but probably without any focus as the vision determined its direction and plans.

Surin also asked him if he was a politician or medical doctor first?

Contrary to common belief that he joined politics after practising medicine, Mahathir said he was first a politician and then obtained his medical degree to gain credentials in pursuing his political career. - Bernama