

# Time for rich nations to uplift others and rebuild trust, says Dr Mahathir

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*'What the world needs now is a much more centralised authority to ensure a common stance against this common enemy'*

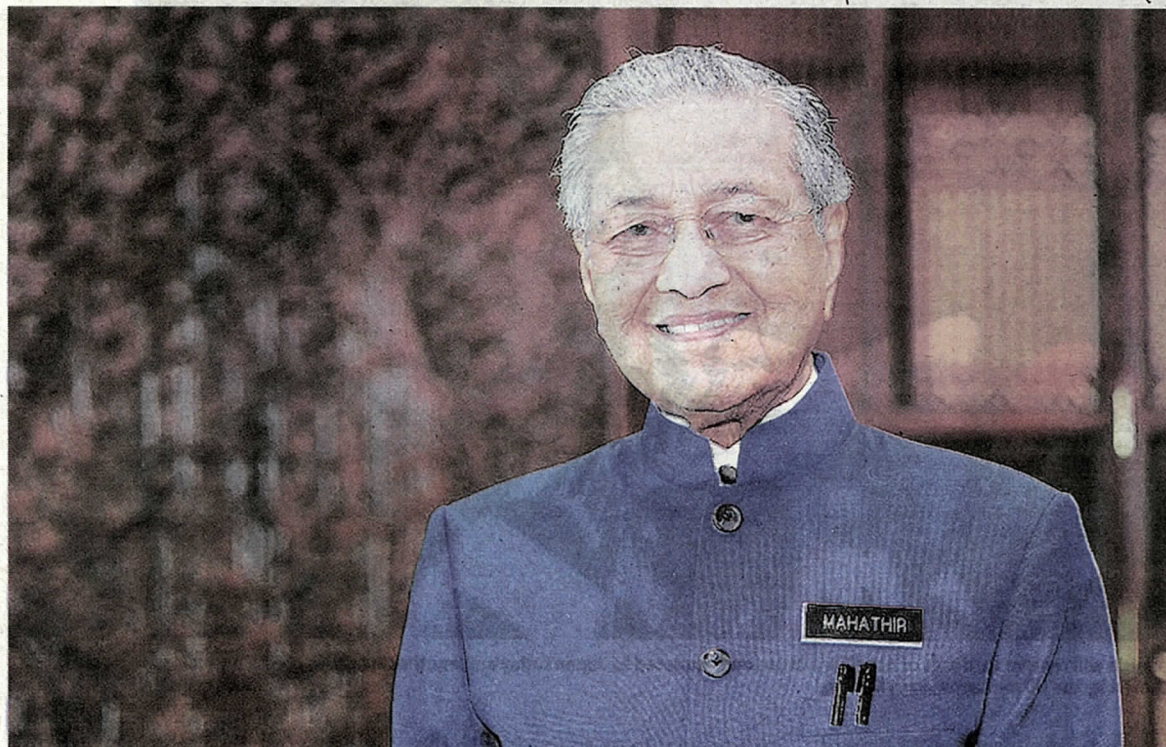
by NUR HANANI AZMAN

THE time is now, especially for rich countries to help lift other unfortunate nations out of the doldrums, poverty and misfortunes as the world battles with the common enemy: Covid-19.

Former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said this is not the time of one-upmanship, the show of military prowess or any other doctrinal superiority as the virus does not discriminate.

"In this pandemic, for the first time, we are fighting with a common enemy (Covid-19 virus). It attacks everybody, every country — rich or poor. Therefore, we need to have a central defence force to combat this. Unfortunately, we are not behaving like that.

"Rich countries that have more money to buy more vaccines think that only poor countries get the disease as long as their country is free. But if you let any country go down, you will go down too," he said during a question and answer session of "Global Leader's Perspective: Leadership Values — National and Global" in conjunction with the



Pic by Muthu Amin Naharul

It is time relations between rich and poor nations are built on empathy and humanity, says Dr M

Asian Leadership Conference 2021 (hybrid) yesterday.

Dr Mahathir highlighted that what the world needs now is a much more centralised authority to ensure a common stance against this common enemy.

Earlier in his speech, he said now is also an opportune time for the powerful nations to step up and put a stop on military aggressions committed by belligerent nations on neighbours and such.

"These nations should be reminded that the virus doesn't distinguish between the aggressors and the victims. More than anything, at a time when most nations are at a loss in dealing with their own devastations, the rich and powerful should step up and extend whatever assistance necessary in restoration and recovery.

"It is an opportunity to extend goodwill and rebuild trust. If in the past, relations between the rich and

poor nations were defined by exploitations of both economic and political influence, it is time that it is built on empathy and humanity," he added.

Dr Mahathir believes there is still a long way to go before we can assume that we are out of the woods, but that does not mean that things should come to a monumental stop while we attempt to overcome the pandemic.

"As it is, most of the developed

nations, which had managed to vaccinate their population significantly, have embarked on a return to some semblance of normalcy that existed pre-Covid-19.

"Less developed nations and we in Asia too wish to be able to embark on our road to recovery, and I am sure citizens from the developed nations hope to be able to return here whether for business or tourism," he added.

While businesses can be done online though nothing beats the time-tested personal interaction, there are other sectors, specifically tourism, that can't be confined to the cybersphere.

The 95-year-old statesman cautioned that if Asia and the less developed nations open up too fast before achieving the same level of immunity as that of the developed nations, it will lead to another possible outbreak of new variants and other risks.

"In other words, the world will only heal when both rich and poor nations get back on their feet. If half the world remains sick, there is no guarantee that it would not drag the other half into another prolonged devastation.

"All these are, however, dependent on the leadership of each and every nation. If they have integrity, honesty, sincerity and are truly concerned about the fate of their people, half the battle is won," he concluded.