

Tun Dr. Mahathir: Asia should liberate itself from Western mental hegemony and support us

SPEECH BY

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1. I would like to thank you for this invitation to speak on the role of Malaysia and Asia on international affairs involving politics, economic and the environment.
2. By itself I do not think Malaysia can do much. But Asia is perhaps more able to contribute to these fields.
3. Asia is not homogenous like Europe. The people of Asia range from dark-skinned people to brown skinned to yellow and to white Caucasians. It is not possible for all these different people inhabiting different parts of Asia to collaborate in voicing identical views on anything. It is not possible at this point in time to think of an Asian Union with the same clout as the European Union.
4. Obviously Asia's contribution would differ greatly between the ethnic and the regional groupings. This will render Asia less able to influence international affairs.
5. However certain parts and certain countries of Asia, particularly those in the East and India have gained a level of development, which would make their voices heard and respected by the rest of the world. They would therefore be able to play a role in international affairs.
6. Unfortunately they are not doing so. They are very reticent and unwilling to take a prominent role. This is because Asians have not got over their having been dominated in the past by the West.
7. Because of this Asia is always trying to understand and accommodate Western ideas and creeds. Asia has tried to adopt European ideologies, European systems of Government, European perceptions of things and values, European regimes for trade and finance etc. etc.

8. There has never been an Asian initiative for the world in any field. When globalisation was promoted by the West, Asians merely try to adjust to a new concept of international relations, particularly in trade, commerce and finance. Asians failed to recognise the inevitability of a New World Order resulting from the advances in speed of travel and instant communication and so to propose new regimes for the world.

9. If Asia wants to play a role in international affairs it must first liberate its minds from Western mental hegemony. This must be through deliberate effort. Asians can fall back on their greatness in the past and learn how to reassert themselves. After all Asians discovered Europe before the Europeans discovered Asia. Spain, the Mediterranean lands and Eastern Europe were ruled for centuries by Asians. So Asian involvement in international affairs is not new.

10. Asian countries have shown that when they have the political will they can excel in all the activities once dominated by the Europeans. Asian countries have now become developed, have been able to set up effective governments and have replaced the European countries in the production of all kinds of goods and services.

11. Many have now developed inventive skills and introduced new products to the world.

12. But Asians have shied away from formulating new ideas and ideologies, new systems and new trading and financial regimes for the world. Yet I am quite sure that if Asians put their minds to it they can offer better solutions to international problems.

13. There is no doubt that the international trade and financial regime as formulated by the west have now been shown to be disastrous for the world. The US Dollar is no longer stable for use as the benchmark for other currencies. Trading in currencies have now undermined the value of the currencies of the world including the United States. Free trade has resulted in many poor countries becoming unable to export their products and earn foreign exchange. Mergers and acquisitions by giant corporations have created monsters that have killed the small man and created serious social and economic problems for the many countries.

14. While all these disasters are happening Asian countries have either been bystanders or they have tried to struggle for survival. They have not proposed anything original or shown any initiative to overcome these problems. Yet they are in a position to do something not just to mitigate the effect of these Western conceived systems and regimes but to propose entirely new ideas and proposals that can replace the old regimes and usher in a new and fairer World Order.

15. Asians can propose fair trade instead of free trade; the replacement of the US Dollar by a new trading currency, the stoppage of currency trading, replacing it with a new Bretton Woods kind of agreement that can restore stability in the valuation of currencies, imposing limits on mergers and acquisitions and the formulation of an international anti-trust laws etc. etc.

16. I would like to mention a particular effort initiated by Malaysia. The world still accepts that one way of solving conflicts between nations is to kill people and see who can kill the most. This is called war but war is about killing people.

17. In human society killing is a serious crime meriting the most severe punishment. Yet killing thousands of people in a war is not considered a crime. This is absurd. You must not kill one person but you can kill hundreds of thousands.

18. Malaysia is trying to make killing people in war as much a crime as murder in any human society. This is to be a total change in human values. Whoever initiates wars must be condemned as criminal killers and must be punished by the international community.

19. Asia can back this effort by Malaysia. This can be a major initiative by Asia. If Asia succeeds in stopping the killings, in making war a crime, it will mark a powerful contribution of Asia to human civilisation. It will mean that the human race has become truly civilised.