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Mahathir-EAEG

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KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 5<sup>91</sup> (Bernama) -- Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Malaysia was aware of efforts by the United States to influence certain countries not to participate in the East Asia Economic Group (EAEG).

+In spite of that, Malaysia will continue with efforts to attract as many East Asian countries as possible to participate in EAEG,+ he told reporters after opening a two-day seminar on +Labuan: An International Offshore Financial Centre+ here.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said, in reply to questions, that Malaysia did not plan to talk to the US about its action as +it is not for us to talk to them.+

When the US formed the common market with Canada, it did not seek Malaysia's views and Malaysia did not interfere, he added

He also said that all countries had their own interests and gave priority to those interests.

+If they hold to American interests, certainly, they will not like cooperation among other countries as it will prevent their control of the world's economy,+ he added.

Formation of EAEG, proposed by Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir on Dec 10, is aimed at enabling East Asian countries to plan trade programmes that would widen markets and trade relations among them. -- more

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Asked if the US action would make it difficult for Malaysia to make EAEG a reality, he said Malaysia was prepared to face all obstacles and difficulties.

+In any matter nothing is easy+ he added.

Malaysia also did not fix a time frame to make EAEG a reality, he said, adding that Malaysia was prepared to be patient on the matter.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the visiting North Korean Prime Minister, Encik Yon Hyong Muk, had voiced support for the EAEG.

Yesterday, International Trade and Industry Minister, Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz, said the proposal to form EAEG had received the support of all Asean countries.

Speaking about the country's economic policy to replace the New Economic Policy which has expired, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the outline perspective plan was not yet ready but, generally, the government felt that efforts to correct the imbalance of the economic position among races and eradication of poverty would be continued.

+How we can attain our aim has not been worked out,+ he said, adding that the government would study the reports of the National Economic Consultative Council (NECC) and the Economic Planning Unit. (EPU). -- more

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Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the government would also take into account comments and views submitted by organisations like chambers of commerce and industries.

The government itself had conducted its own studies since last year.

On the proposal of a PBS-USNO coalition government in Sabah, he said at the moment he was unable to foresee the future of such a government. -- Bernama