

JAPAN STANCE NO DETERRENT

EAEG drive still on: PM

By SHARIFF HAMID

MALAYSIA will continue with efforts to promote the East Asian Economic Group (EAEG) even though Japan is reported to have rejected the proposal recently.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the news does not deter Malaysia's spirit in wanting to see the EAEG become a reality. He added that it is not by mere talk that the EAEG will materialise but through sheer hard work.

He was commenting on a report by Kyodo News Agency that Japanese Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu rejected the EAEG proposal in a speech he delivered at a private forum in Tokyo recently.

Mr Kaifu was quoted as saying: "At a time when we are trying to build a free trade system, we shouldn't create problems and misunderstandings with the aimless establishment of lots of small groups.

"Some may criticise me for taking a cool and impassive approach towards the EAEG, but I am thinking from a

global perspective, one that will benefit Asia."

Speaking to reporters after launching the 9th Malaysian Film Festival in Kuala Lumpur on Saturday, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said Malaysia will carry on explaining to the rest of the world the rationale and objectives of the EAEG to strengthen the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (Gatt) system.

"Efforts to explain the setting up of the EAEG have been aggressively addressed to the countries in East Asia. Now, these efforts will cover other nations.

"We have been promoting the EAEG because we want it to be a reality for the betterment and growth of the region. We will continue to explain the concept," the Prime Minister said.

Earlier, in his speech at the opening of Merdeka Studio, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the Government is willing to consider setting up a film village, like that found in Taiwan and Singapore, to boost the industry.

"It is time for the industry to grow and be on par with other important industrial sectors in the country, especially when the other industries have made significant progress.

"I am confident the film industry can be very lucrative and a promising one if those involved in the industry produce better quality movies to increase box-office revenue and to stake their claim to have them shown in the better cinemas," he said.

He added that the industry's performance has yet to record the progress expected by the Government despite the encouragements and incentives provided to boost the industry.

"This can clearly be seen in the total gate collections by cinemas in the country last year. Of the \$124 million collected, local films' share was only \$6 million," he said.

The failure of Malaysian films to win the best movie award at the film festival in 1989 also reveals the situation in the industry, he added.