

European treaty cause for concern, says PM

By Robert Goh

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — Malaysia is concerned that the Maastricht Treaty, agreed to by the European Community last week, will strengthen the formation of a "Fortress Europe".

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that Malaysia was concerned that the federal European State, with its single European market, would become "so strong that it may not need to trade with anyone else".

He said the possibility was always there that the community would become a "Fortress Europe", even though they had stated otherwise.

"For when an economic union is formed, those who had previously dealt with many countries will have to deal with only one, and if it decides not to let a trade item in, the others (member States) will do likewise."

Dr Mahathir was responding to questions from reporters on the treaty which seeks to create a single European currency, a single market and a single voice in trade and politics.

The Prime Minister had earlier given away awards at the 1991 Police Day Awards at the Putra World Trade Centre.

On a report that Japan wanted Malaysia's proposal for an East Asia Economic Caucus to be merged with the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation (Apec) forum, he said this was not possible.

"The United States and Canada are in Apec but as they also come under the North America Free Trade Arrangement, they will not be suitable members in the EAEC."

Dr Mahathir said the US could also not be a member of the European Community even though its culture was closer to Europe's than Asia's, and the Atlantic Ocean separating it from Europe was not as wide as the Pacific Ocean which separates it from Asia.

Asked whether he would raise the issue of the EAEC with the new Japanese Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa during his 12-day trip to Japan beginning on Wednesday, he said he was not sure if he would be meeting him.

However, he would be meeting with Japanese businessmen and leaders, such as former Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone.

He added that he would discuss with them Malaysia's views on the EAEC "if necessary" but would not impose his views on them.