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MAHATHIR SAYS ASEAN WILL EXPLAIN EAEC CONCEPT  
Mahathir - EAEC

SINGAPORE, Jan 28<sup>1972</sup> (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that Asean will meet potential members of the proposed East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC) to explain the concept to them as the first step towards its implementation.

This follows the acceptance of the Malaysian-initiated proposal by the leaders of the six Asean member nations at the conclusion of their two-day summit here.

The Malaysian Prime Minister told a press conference after the close of the meeting that he was satisfied with the outcome of the summit in respect of the EAEC.

Asked whether the meeting could have achieved better results had it not been due to Indonesia's reservation on the proposal, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said +this is as good as any result+.

+The main thing is that it has now been accepted by all Asean countries,+ he added. -- more

▼28/01/20-16MST

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Mahathir - EAEC 2 Singapore

He said that from now on the Asean officials would have to work out the different steps to be taken in order to realise the objective of creating the EAEC.

+Asean ministers will then have to meet the potential members of the caucus to explain to them what the EAEC is all about and if it materialised how do we employ it as a means of ensuring free trade all over the world+.

The Prime Minister anticipated this process to take place within five years.

He said action towards this would be taken as early as possible.

+I hope it would be realised in less than five years+.

On why the United States and Australia were not included as the potential members of the caucus, he said that by definition the two countries were not in East Asia.

On whether he expected Japan to come forward more positively on the proposal now that it had been accepted by the Asean leaders, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said it was his hope that Tokyo would be forthcoming from now on.  
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Mahathir - EAEC 3 Singapore

+We understand Japan's desire to have good relations with the US. We are not out to cause problems to Japan.

+But we hope for a bit more understanding from the United States,+ Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said.

On the notion that the EAEC would create a wedge between the United States and Japan; the world's two largest trading nations, the Prime Minister said the wedge was already there.

+It is not because of our doing; The only way to resolve it is for the United States to be more competitive with the Japanese. Or maybe, Japan should be less efficient,+ he said.

The Prime Minister rejected a suggestion that the proposed EAEC would come under the umbrella of Apec(Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) forum as advanced by some critics but he stressed that there was nothing wrong in the EAEC cooperating with Apec.

He pointed out that members of the North American Free Trade Area (Nafta) were also members of Apec but Nafta did not come under the umbrella of Apec. -- more

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Mahathir - EAEC 4 (last) Singapore

On the future of the United Nations, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said Malaysia always supported the world body.

However, he felt that the present arrangement where permanent members of the Security Council were vested with veto powers was a bit outdated.

+It is totally undemocratic where one country can reject the views of 160 other countries.

+We do not want one or two countries forcing the UN or using the UN for their own purpose,+ he added.

During the press conference, well-attended by representatives of the international media, the Prime Minister was also asked whether the other five Asean leaders supported his hard-hitting speech delivered at yesterday's opening of the summit.

He replied that privately a lot of people agreed with him, but officially not many were +willing to stick their neck out+.

+Malaysia is fond of sticking our neck out → others are not,+ he said.  
-- Bernama