

U GE 08-10 00195 EA166

aae the -

Repetition inserting dropped words.

Please read first graf...that ASEAN develop a post-Ministerial Conference of the ASEAN Economic Ministers Meeting. ...

ASEAN NEEDS POST-MINISTERIAL ECONOMIC MINSTERS MEETING

Mahathir-Asean

92 (P)
KUALA LUMPUR, Oct. 8 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today proposed that ASEAN develop a post-Ministerial Conference of the ~~Asean~~ Economic Ministers Meeting to further strengthen economic cooperation among member nations of the regional grouping.

It should be along the line of the annual ASEAN Ministerial Meeting and have a strong representation, he said.

+Presently economic matters are covered during the (Asean) Foreign Ministers Meeting but 'as economic matters becomes complicated, we feel that economic matters should only be discussed by economic ministers and therefore such forum is needed,+ he said.

The Prime Minister was speaking to reporters after opening the first ASEAN Congress here, organised by ASEAN and the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) .

Dr Mahathir said there were details which have to be taken into consideration and only the economic ministers would be in a better position to highlight problems requiring decision-making.-- more

CNS3882

U GE 08-10 00121 EA125

aae tbe

Mahathir-Asean 2 Kuala Lumpur

+Foreign ministers may make decisions based on political relations but not based on economic interests,+ he said, adding that the proposed ASEAN economic ministers meeting should have a strong representation as that of the foreign ministers.

In his keynote address to the four-day congress, Dr Mahathir said with the formation of such forum, other institutional and supportive mechanisms related to ASEAN economic cooperation could be further strengthened.

A start has been made with the strengthening of the ASEAN Secretariat, he said.

A lot more could be done in areas concerning industrial joint ventures, and strengthening of monetary and financial cooperation, he said. -- more

▼08/10/12-49MST

CNS3887

U GE 08-10 00157 EA126

aae tbe

Mahathir-Asean 3 Kuala Lumpur

Dr Mahathir said Asean would have to act with 'force and statesmanship to strengthen its position within the East Asian, regional economy while maintaining and even enhancing linkages with the Western European bloc' and the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

He said over the next 25 years, efforts are needed to continuously strengthen the ASEAN Concert of Nations.

While ASEAN expects increasing globalisation, the regional grouping must also expect the consolidation of regional integration in three crucial regional economies.

He said they are the regional economy of Western Europe, the regional economy of the NAFTA and the already highly-integrated regional economy of East Asia.

At the rates of growth achieved over the last decade, by the year 2017, East Asia is poised to have a Gross National Product substantially bigger than that of Western Europe, he said. -- more

▼08/10/12-55MST

CNS3907

U GE 08-10 00160 EA129

aae tbe

Mahathir-Asean 4 Kuala Lumpur

In this light, Dr Mahathir said it was crucial that the current global trading system opened up, widened and deepened.

It was also vital to ensure that all the integrating regional economies become processes for increasing open regionalism.

+A Fortress Western Europe, a Fortress America and a Fortress east Asia will be calamitous to all of us,+ he added.

The Prime Minister said ASEAN had recently made a giant leap forward towards far-reaching economic cooperation by agreeing to the Common Effective Preferential Tariff (CEPT) arrangement that would lead to the proposed Asean Free Trade Area (AFTA) within the next 15 years.,

+In this context, Asean must ensure that the CEPT works so that the process of trade liberalisation will be completed within the 15 years, although it is Malaysia's hope that AFTA would be firmly in place sooner,+ he said. -- more

▼08/10/13-18MST

CNS3910

U GE 08-10 00201 EA130

aae tbe

Mahathir-Asean 5 (last) Kuala Lumpur

+In a world where international relations is overwhelmingly being dictated by economic considerations, failure to have an effective, meaningful and workable programme of economic cooperation that ensures a stake for all, will only make ASEAN a toothless tiger rather than economic tigers,+ Dr Mahathir added.

When asked to comment on 'the Asean-EC economic relations pertaining to the recent European financial crisis, the Prime Minister said :+ 'There is a lesson to be learnt that countries should not live beyond their means and that you can't survive economically by manipulating interest rates and currency exchange or trying to obstruct the growth of the developing countries.+

He said the problem with the European economy was that wages were too high and investments were running low because nobody wanted to pay high wages to workers.

The other contributing factors was unemployment.,

+And there are places where unemployment is as high as 20 per cent and you have to pay more for the unemployment benefit, thus weakening the economy. If we have 20 per cent unemployment here, there will be a revolution,+ he said. -- Bernama