

ASEAN WAY TO PROSPERITY

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Dr M: Members now capable of cross-border investments

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DAVAO: Asean states are capable of cross-border investment without having to depend on investors from outside the region, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

"We are now discovering a new capacity within Asean, like cross-border investment, without the need to look outside (the region for investors)," he said in this southern Philippine city.

The Prime Minister said such activities would create a conducive environment for South-East Asian nations to prosper.

He said Asean countries had the resources and experience to carry out investment and development among themselves.

Dr Mahathir was addressing members of the Davao Chamber of Commerce and Industry on the last day of his four-day official visit to the Philippines.

He said Asean, as a regional grouping, had more success than other similar groupings, both among developing and developed countries.

Asean's success, he said, was the ability of its members to talk to each other and learn from their mistakes.

Another advantage of intra-Asean investment was the creation of a stable economic climate.

"A region that is stable will definitely attract foreign investment (outside Asean)," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia believed political differences among Asean members were less important than developing the economy.

"We give priority to developing the economy as a prosperous nation will not want to create instability caused by political differences."

On the East Asean Growth Area (EAGA), Dr Mahathir said it was primarily to boost development in the region.

"EAGA, a Philippine initiative, will cover southern Philippines, Sabah, Sarawak, Kalimantan and Sulawesi (in Indonesia) and Brunei," he said.

"Malaysia supports growth triangles which have attracted the attention of western countries as a development mechanism," he said.

Speaking to Malaysian reporters later, Dr Mahathir said his visit had fostered closer relations with the people here, especially those in the southern region involved in the EAGA.