

aae tbe

Mahathir-EAEC

EAEC NOT ANTI-U.S. TRADING BLOC, SAYS MAHATHIR

¹⁹⁴
KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 5 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad reiterated today that the East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC) is a forum for East Asians to talk on matters of common interest, without the presence of the United States.

It was not a trading bloc which would exclude other nations from trading with East Asian countries, the Prime Minister said.

"Surely, the East Asians can talk to each other without the US presence," the Prime Minister said when responding to questions by reporters on American opposition to the EAEC.

Dr Mahathir said the EAEC had received unreasonable opposition when in fact the caucus is "a really harmless forum".

"All we are saying is that we should be able to meet to talk about our common problems," he told reporters after opening the first East Asian Young Leaders Congress here. -- more

▼05/08/18-12MST

CNS6577

U GE 05-08 00190 EG562

aae tbe

Mahathir-EAEC 2 Kuala Lumpur

Earlier, when delivering his keynote address at the congress, Dr Mahathir outlined seven reasons why the EAEC should be set up, saying the explanation was necessary "in view of the campaign of lies and deliberate disinformation on the caucus".

He said the EAEC would be a loose consultative forum for East Asia and have both a regional and extra-regional agenda.

In pursuit of the regional agenda, the countries of East Asia should meet at the ministerial level to discuss how to enrich their regional economic cooperation.

"On the extra-regional agenda, we should discuss how we can cooperate to ensure an open, non-protectionist, healthy global trading and economic system," he said.

Another reason for the EAEC is that on matters related to world trade, East Asian nations must be champions of free and fair trade.

Other reasons are that although regional trade is crucial, East Asian nations should not confine their relationships to trade but seek to optimise joint development zones, trans-border investment, technology sharing, tourism and even labour flows. -- more

▼05/08/18-20MST

CNS6604

U GE 05-08 00158 EG563

aae tbe

Mahathir-EAEC 3 (last) Kuala Lumpur

East Asians should aspire to be a model for true North-South cooperation, while whatever cooperation they embarked upon should be grounded in the principles of mutual benefit, mutual respect, egalitarianism, consensus and democracy, he added.

Asked by reporters on ties with Israel, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia might establish relations with the country if Tel Aviv proved it was sincere and honest in wanting peace with the Palestinians and Arab countries.

"We do not have a stand that we must continue with an old policy even though a country no longer threatens anyone and is on good terms (with others)," he said.

He said if the Arab countries such as Jordan could have diplomatic ties with Israel, "why not us".

"We do not have such a hardline stand that disregards whatever others do," he said. -- Bernama

ES CTL