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Mahathir-Japan

(EMBARGO: For use after 10.30pm today)

JAPAN CAN GIVE GREATER DYNAMISM TO REGIONAL ECONOMY, SAYS MAHATHIR

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KUALA LUMPUR, Aug. 27 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Japan's participation in the East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC) would contribute greater dynamism to the region's economic development.

He hoped Japan, being a natural member of the region, would see the benefits of the EAEC.

"We are seeing a rise in regionalism with three regions dominating the world economy -- the European Union, NAFTA (North America Free Trade Area) and the East Asian countries which include Asean.

"In an attempt to halt the trend towards exclusive economic groupings, we in Asean have adopted the concept of EAEC which will promote open regionalism and the multilateral trading system," he said at a dinner for Japanese Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama at his Sri Perdana official residence here tonight.

Murayama arrived here yesterday for a three-day visit to Malaysia as part of a Southeast Asian tour which has taken him to the Philippines and Vietnam. He will leave for Singapore tomorrow. -- more

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Dr Mahathir said the bilateral relations between Malaysia and Japan have greatly enhanced Japanese trade and investments in Malaysia, topping foreign investments in the country.

Malaysians, he said, are ready to benefit more directly from the presence of Japanese investments in terms of technology-transfer, management training and technical skills.

"After many years of collaboration, we now seek a real economic partnership with Japan where benefits are equally shared," he said.

He said Malaysia welcomed Japan's aspiration to play an active role in the international community as a nation of peace.

"As a developing nation we have emphasised the need for socio-economic developments as against any politico-military arrangements as the foundation of peace and security in the region," he added. -- more

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He said Malaysia believed that Japan, as a major global economic power, should assume a greater international role in the maintenance of peace and security within an improved United Nations system.

"There is a need now to strengthen the protection and promotion of multi-culturism and pluralistic societies around the world and turn back a rising tide of racism in various parts of the world, particularly in Western Europe and North America," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the unprecedented increase in the number of peacekeeping operations around the world signified the emergence of new crises after the Cold War.

The substantial increases in demands and costs on the UN peacekeeping operations were breaching the limits of UN resources.

In the face of discernible reluctance by the major contributors among the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development countries to support new peacekeeping operations, either in terms of manpower and funds, Japan's role and commitment would make a crucial difference, he said.

In this respect, he said, Malaysia hoped Japan would not waver in its financial support for peacekeeping operations.

Dr Mahathir said as a major player in the international arena, Japan must be prepared for peacekeeping duties directly: -- Bernama

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