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Mahathir-China
CHINA NOT A THREAT, SAYS PM

By: Wan A.Hulaimi

The Hague, Dec 4 (Bernama) -- China is seen as a security threat by outsiders but not by countries within East Asia, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has said.

Replying to a question after delivering his keynote address on "Working Together For A World Century" at a special session on Malaysia at the 9th Global Panel conference here Tuesday, Dr Mahathir said that Malaysia "felt comfortable" with China, and this was characterised by the number of reciprocal visits and investments between the two countries.

"The question of security in East Asia keeps cropping up although countries in the region feel secure. This is the result of the impression created by others," he said in answer to a question posed by a delegate from Hong Kong.

Elaborating on this, he said that there were so many questions about security because this was an impression created by others, not by countries in East Asia which were not allowed to sit down together to discuss issues of importance without the presence of "some great power."

"East Asians are not nations of conquest and countries in the region talk to each other which was why the East Asian Economic Caucus was mooted. But no, we have not been allowed to sit together, East Asians cannot sit together unless in the presence of some other power to oversee what we are talking about," he said.

Regarding Malaysia's position with China, Dr Mahathir said: "We are not afraid of China. We have good relations with China, I'd say very good indeed. We are secure, Malaysia is secure. We don't think we are going to war over the Spratlys."

He said that this question of China's threat was one he had been asked very often in all the countries he had been to by people who felt that the region would not be secure "without the 7th Fleet going up and down the coast of Asia."

"The history of East Asia has not been a history of conquest. China has not been a conquering nation," he said.

He told the audience of about 400 people that this did not represent the view of the people of East Asia who were more interested in economic development.

Answering a question on foreign companies in Malaysia, Dr Mahathir said that there were myriads of things in Malaysia that were attractive to them, amongst which were political activity and certainty.

"We've had political stability for a very long time. We've never changed the system of government or policies of government. Investors feel sure if they invest in Malaysia. They'll not see a change of policy which will force them to pull out."

Earlier in his keynote address, Dr Mahathir had made a plea to nations East and West to adopt a policy of friendship rather than a confrontation in the next millennium which he did not think would be the century of Asia even though Asian nations were poised to make great economic strides into the next century.

He also called for Western nations to drop the "Crusade" mindset which looked at Islam as a religion of terrorism whilst a greater amount of killing and destruction were done by people who were not Muslims, and the weapons of terrorism were manufactured in the West.

"The crusade of the future must be the crusade to mend and to rebuild,"

he urged.

Dr Mahathir's keynote address, the highlight of the conference Tuesday and which attracted the biggest crowd, was described in the summing up address of Allen Weinstein, chairman of the session and president of the Centre for Democracy in the United States, as a "very moving presentation."

Later at a brief press conference, Dr Mahathir was asked by a European journalist on his policy on human rights in Myanmar.

On human rights generally, Dr Mahathir replied that the Asian perception was different from the European one.

Malaysia's policy of constructive engagement with Myanmar had paid off because now the country, which once closed its door to the world, is now opening up and is convinced that the free market system is a good one.

"This is a radical change," he said.

He told the questioner that she should not expect Myanmar to change overnight into a democracy whereas it took Europe 200 years to become one.

The Global Panel conference, organised by the European Research Centre (ERC) was the third event of the day for Dr Mahathir on the second day of his visit to Holland.

Earlier in the morning, he visited the Fokker Space BV factory and the Amsterdam Arena stadium where he witnessed the signing of a memorandum of understanding between a Malaysian company, Enerwise, and the Dutch engineering company, Grabrowsky & Poort BV, builders of the stadium, for a land reclamation project in Mersing.

In the afternoon, Dr Mahathir and his entourage visited the Netherlands Organisation of Applied Scientific Research (TNO) before attending the Global Panel reception and dinner in the Hague City Hall in the evening. --
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