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Mahathir-EAEC

PM SAYS EAEC CAN COMPETE AGAINST EU AND NAFTA IN MULTIMEDIA

By: Tham Choy Lin

TOKYO, May 13 (Bernama) -- An overwhelming Japanese audience applauded Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad when he spoke of a new involvement for the EAEC in calling east Asian countries to vie against Europe and North America in the information technology field.

He said the EAEC could form a group that would compete with the European Union and North America Free Trade Area not only economically but in other fields and the search for applications of multimedia.

"The EAEC stands for East Asia Economic Caucus. It could also changed into East Asian Electronic Community," said Dr Mahathir as he sought to drive home his point during a question and answer session after delivering the commemorative address at the 12th general assembly of the World Teleport Association here today.

He was replying to a Japanese delegate on the future thrust of the EAEC and whether it might encourage the development of an east Asian super information highway.

Dr Mahathir said apart from economic growth and development, the accumulation and the search for knowledge can be a new area of competition between countries instead of war.

"If we have no competition, there is no stimulus," he said.

East Asian countries could then link up with each other and exchange knowledge as well as help less developed countries to catch up and balance the economic, cultural and social development of the world.

He hoped that in time, other nations such as those in West Asia will join in this competition.

Answering another question on Japan's role in developing telecommunications in Asia, Dr Mahathir said with its advanced expertise, Japan can advise others how to set up multimedia super corridors and participate in the industries in these areas.

He said Malaysia was establishing its own multimedia super corridor with private sector involvement and apart from the infrastructure and incentives, it would continuously upgrade the facilities.

"We put a lot of emphasis and importance towards the information and communications sector and Japan can play a big role. Japanese industries are very advanced in this area and we have been in contact with them," he said.

On the type of prosperity the world should strive for and the leadership required of it, Dr Mahathir referred to Malaysia's Vision 2020 to achieve developed nation status by that year and efforts to ensure that its culture, heritage, values and moral codes were not left behind in the process.

He said in the increasingly borderless world, the idea of one nation of one ethnic origin would be out of date and the world would evolve into a multi-ethnic entity like Malaysia one day. -- BERNAMA

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