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PM CALLS FOR LEVEL PLAYING FIELD IN TRADE

SERDANG, April 3 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad says it is not fair for developed countries to accuse Malaysia as well as other developing countries of not opening their markets fully to foreign competition.

He said Malaysia was tiny when compared with trading giants such as the United States and Japan and as such, countries like Malaysia, whose economy was still far behind the developed countries needed to protect itself.

"We are talking about a level playing field which involves players of the same size otherwise it is not a fair position," Dr Mahathir told reporters after a day-long visit to Universiti Pertanian Malaysia here today which has now been renamed Universiti Putra Malaysia.

The Prime Minister said: "We are tiny in comparison with the economy of Japan and the US...it is not fair for them to say let's play American football when they have players who are 250 pounds and we have players who are only 20 pounds.

Both the U.S. and Japan, in two separate reports on major trade restrictions, complained about Malaysia's import policies, local content requirement, policy on the automotive industry and service sectors.

However, Malaysia has always maintained that while it was committed to opening its markets to foreign competition, it would do so at its own pace in a manner that would not jeopardise domestic industries but rather in a way that would position them well to face global competition.

"We want fairness in the complaint," said Dr Mahathir, referring to the fact that domestic players needed time to build up their strength in order to be given an equal and competitive chance. -- BERNAMA

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