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Mahathir-Asem

DR MAHATHIR NOT OPTIMISTIC ABOUT ASEM

KUALA LUMPUR, March 22 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he is not too optimistic that the Asia-Europe Meeting (Asem) in London next month will yield positive decisions on the economic situation in Southeast Asia.

The prime minister said he would, however, use the opportunity to again explain the true situation regarding the matter although Europe might have different views on trade liberalisation.

Asked by reporters whether the meeting would yield positive decisions, Dr Mahathir said: "I hope...maybe, but I'm not that optimistic." He was speaking to reporters at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport, near here, on his return from a three-day visit to Germany.

He will be attending the meeting on April 2-4. The meeting will be attended by the 15 European Union members, China, Japan, South Korea and all the Asean nations except Myanmar.

On the boat people phenomenon resulting from the economic turmoil in Southeast Asia, Dr Mahathir said many parties blamed the governments of the region for this development.

"Everywhere I explain this problem, the answer is we must restore investors' confidence, we must have more disciplined, more transparent governments," he said.

He added that Asem would also discuss the criteria for new membership.

While in Germany, Dr Mahathir led a delegation to Hannover to attract German multimedia and information technology companies to invest in Malaysia's Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC).

He said the response from the Germans was good and they wanted to know whether the situation in Malaysia was conducive to investments.

Dr Mahathir, who had promoted the MSC in several countries including Britain, the United States and Japan, said he would do so in two or three more places.

The MSC, billed as a comprehensive test-bed for developing and testing new multimedia technology, is a 15km by 50km area with world-class physical and information infrastructure. -- BERNAMA

MAM ES JK