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MAHATHIR-AFTA

AFTA WILL BENEFIT MALAYSIA AND OTHER ASEAN COUNTRIES

By: Mohamed Kamel Othman

CHICAGO, Sept 4 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the implementation of Asean Free Trade Area (AFTA) in 2003 will benefit Malaysia and other countries in the grouping as it will open up the market.

It was better for Malaysia to have a bigger market for its manufactured goods than to confine it to only 22 million people in the country, he said in a dialogue session with Malaysian students at Radisson Hotel O'Hare in Rosemont, Sunday.

"If we keep the market only to Malaysia, we are afraid we can't get good returns from the investments made," said Dr Mahathir.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia is prepared to open up its market when AFTA takes effect because it will create a bigger market in the region.

He said that by that time "we would be able to compete with others."

Asean groups Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

However, Dr Mahathir said that the country needed skills to master all the technicalities of producing and manufacturing of goods that evolved in the modern business.

The Prime Minister advised the students to study hard so that they would be better and whatever the country produces will be more competitive than that from neighbouring countries. -- BERNAMA

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