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MAHATHIR-APEC

LEADERS TO VOICE OUT FREELY IN APEC, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LANGAT, Oct 13 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said that the coming Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) in Shanghai will enable leaders to meet and hopefully allow them to voice out their opinions freely on current world issues.

"If we have only one voice that is allowed to be heard, it will not be a dialogue and we are not able to identify problems and their causes," he told reporters after opening the Paya Indah Wetlands in Dengkil, near here, today.

In APEC, he said, leaders can discuss openly on the causes and ways to overcome and curb terrorism. "We have no other intentions. We want to get rid of terrorism but it must be done in a way that is effective."

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia itself had experience of fighting terrorists for more than 42 years, which resulted not only the death of its citizens but also soldiers.

However, the country's success in fighting terrorists was not only because of the army, but also in being able to identify the causes of why they (terrorists) had rebelled and addressed them.

In this context, the prime minister said that there is a need to identify the causes as to why people would resort to extraordinary acts such as killing themselves and committing gruesome attacks like the recent attack on the World Trade Centre (WTC) in New York.

Dr Mahathir said that one of the causes could be the unsettling Palestinian issue as well as the sufferings and death faced by the people of Chechnya and Iraq.

All these issues must be given due attention and be addressed, in order to lessen terrorism, the prime minister said, adding that there should also be a clear definition of when a person is defined as a terrorist and when he is not.

There is also a way to terrorise such as fighting off soldiers but by exploding oneself in a supermarket where there are no soldiers and instead causing innocent people to be killed, then that is terrorism, he stressed.

One too cannot call those struggling for their countries as terrorists but if they use ways of killing innocents, then they are terrorists, he added.

On the Paya Indah Wetlands, Dr Mahathir said that it was a national gift from the central government through the Selangor state government as well as others who had contributed.

Sprawling over 3,000 hectares, the wetlands offers a stunning array of ecosystems from rehabilitated tin mining land to degraded peat swamp forest.

Besides being a bird-watcher's paradise, other exotic wildlife includes estuarine crocodiles, Botswana hippopotamus, Indian swamp deer, Chinese cranes and other flora and fauna.

Open on weekdays, except Monday, the entrance rates are RM5 for adults and RM3 for children and for weekends, it will be RM7 and RM4 respectively.

On the preservation of the environment, Dr Mahathir said there are times when developers do not heed calls of not cutting down hills when it is possible to develop without destroying the environment.

There is no need to flatten the hills as they are themselves a beauty of the environment and some development projects which do preserve their natural surroundings had benefitted from them, he said.

While urging developers and architects to be more concern about the environment when drawing their plans, he said environmentalists should also not to be too fanatical as there should be a balance between preserving the environment and development. -- BERNAMA

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