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Mahathir-Asia

ASIA CAPABLE AS THE WORLD'S THIRD VOICE

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 19 (Bernama) -- Asia has the capability to be the world's third voice balancing that of the United States and European countries, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight.

In an Special Interview aired on NTV, he said, Asia should put its place as a region that can help shape the world.

"Asia has the capability even if we discount its population which is very big. We have to take into consideration the fact that many countries of Asia have made tremendous progress," he said.

He said Japan is already a developed country, China is coming along and so are India and South-East Asian countries. Asian countries have a big stake of the globe and thus, they must help to shape it in terms of international practices.

Dr Mahathir said developing nations must ask themselves where they want to go from here, what their options are and what they should do about it.

Commenting on the local front in the segmented TV programme, Dr Mahathir said he feels that Malaysia has yet to strongly establish itself as a developed nation despite being viewed as already having achieved the developed status by the global community.

Dr Mahathir said there is still much work to be done and making sure Malaysia's development is spread out and ensure that the growth is not only in the cities but also in rural areas by changing the way things are done.

Citing an example, he said, in rural areas farms are very small and inefficient that deprive owners from adopting new technologies to improve their yield and returns.

He said we have to change that by amalgamating and, to some extent, training our people to run farms as commercial enterprises so that they can earn more for themselves.

Dr Mahathir said that it is not a question of speed but understanding the changes that are taking place. Left to themselves, what will happen is that there will be rural-urban migration.

"When rural people come to the cities and find no suitable jobs for themselves, there are going to be greater slumps in the cities. We can tackle (this problem) in two ways.

"We create more jobs in cities so that people can live better in the cities and meet its standards of living or alternatively, we can make the rural areas more attractive.

"And this is a matter of providing good infrastructure like communications and transporatation. This is what we are trying to do. While we cannot help people coming into the cities, we should ensure that they are well qualified when they come.

"And even if they stay in the rural areas, they would enjoy a good life," he added.

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