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Mahathir-Japan

MAHATHIR ASKS JAPAN NOT TO REJECT ITS ROLE IN ASIA

By: Salbiah Said

TOKYO, June 3 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir has asked Japan not to reject a role in Asia, noting that its contribution to the region will be immense given that its formula for success has driven other nations to adopt it of their own free will.

"The approach to be adopted by Asia need not be that of the Europeans. We need not conquer or dominate in order to have our values and ideas accepted.

"Japan's formula for success has prompted other countries in Asia to adopt it of their own free will," Dr Mahathir said in his keynote address at an international symposium here today.

He said that the Japanese people had been accused of being copycats and used to produce inferior imitations of European products, but after the end of the Pacific War, Japan decided to produce high quality products while maintaining low prices.

"Japan succeeded admirably. But it was still considered a copycat nation," he said at the one-day symposium on "The Asian Dimension under the New World Order: Evolving Paradigms in Asia and Japan" organised by the Institute for International Policy Studies (IIPS) at Hotel Okura.

Change, Dr Mahathir said, could be for the good or for the worse.

"When Japan decided to modernise, it also adopted the wrong European values. Coming out of isolation, you decided to acquire an empire through conquest. You now sincerely regret that wrong decision.

"But is there a need to go into reverse gear and reject a role in Asia?" he said.

"It is obvious that if Japan wishes to play a role together with other leading countries, Japan's contribution would be immense," Dr Mahathir said.

The prime minister said that some of the ideas emanating from the Europeans were harmful, citing market liberalisation and deregulation as examples.

The world economy, he said, was growing quite well before the idea of liberalisation and deregulations in a borderless world was mooted.

"Indeed, Japan's rapid recovery and the growth of Korea and South-East Asia owed nothing to trade liberalisation and the 'rule-based' trading of the free market. (Here I would like to point out that a free market with rule-based trading are contradictions in terms)," said Dr Mahathir.

The prime minister said that Asia, although a large continent, is not as evenly developed as Europe, nor are the people ethnically or culturally similar.

He said that only one country in Asia is developed and that is Japan, while South Korea and China are fast moving up but South-East Asia and the Indian sub-continent are behind China and Korea. The other countries of Asia, that is Central and West Asia, have not really made much progress.

Consequently, Asia could not present itself as a single entity with common stands on international issues.

Besides, he said, at the moment Asians were not psychologically prepared to play their role in international affairs.

"They still tend to defer to the Europeans. Perhaps this is a relic of the old European domination of Asia," he said.

He said that Americans, Canadians, Australians or New Zealanders may be living outside of Europe, but culturally they are Europeans and they tend

to close ranks when faced with challenges by non-Europeans.

Said Dr Mahathir: "The tie is not just ethnic, but also religious for Europeans, nominally at least are Christians and as Christians their old enmity towards Islam in particular still colour their thinking.

"They were at one time more anti-Jew or anti-Semitic. But horrified by the Holocaust, they now bend over backwards in order to atone for their crimes. Such is their about-turn that they are willing to tolerate the crimes committed by Israel," he added.

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