

PM: Asian countries bogged down by past acrimony

FUKUOKA: Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad believes that Asia can take on the global economy as a nexus if countries are willing to set aside past acrimony.

He told a group of business executives that with the advancement of communications technology and modes of travel, the West could form joint corporations with countries that used to be embroiled in bloodshed.

He said Western cultures went through an amalgamation and mutual understanding under the objectives of the European Union (EU), as well as turned into regional powerhouses.

“Even the Germans joined France in its Bastille Day parade. Here in Asia, we are putting up with a lot due to past acrimony. This is why we can't form an Asian union, unlike the EU.

“We are wasting too much time being influenced by previous animosities. The question is, how long do we have to be bogged down by our past?” he said at the Kyushu-Asia Institute of Leadership.

Present were executives from Kyushu Electric Power Co. and Kyushu Railway Co., as well as Foreign Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah and Youth and Sports Minister Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman.

Dr Mahathir told the audience they must readjust their outlook



Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the Kyushu-Asia Institute of Leadership in Fukuoka yesterday. With him are Foreign Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah (seated, third from right), Youth and Sports Minister Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman (seated, second from left) and business executives from Kyushu Electric Power Co. and Kyushu Railway Co.

for the future in which all countries would no longer be of a single ethnicity.

He said it would be untenable to have business policies that do not take into account multiracialism or multiculturalism.

“There are those who do not want others to come into their country to preserve their ethnicity.

“Even the United States is ac-

cepting people of other races, although the president is trying to put that in reverse.

“But with the ease of travel, porous borders and communications technology, it is only a matter of time before all countries become multiracial.”

At a question-and-answer session, Dr Mahathir was asked on aspects of Japanese education that could be improved.

“You can always make your students travel to broaden their horizons by experiencing life in other countries.

“At the same time, they can learn more about world cultures in classes.”

On the possibility of promoting patriotism in a multiracial country, he said its implementation would be realised if the people accepted the country's values

and position.

“The late US president Dwight D. Eisenhower was of German descent, but he was loyal to his country and fought against Germany.

“Eventually, all countries will be multiracial. It will not happen overnight, but it will over time. We need to accept it and make readjustments (to suit future changes).”