

'Strategic alliances a must'

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Dr M: We need partners to keep up with technology

TOKYO: Strategic alliances with international telecommunication giants are necessary for the country to acquire and keep up with technology, says Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

If this was not done, Malaysia would be left behind as technology moves at a very fast pace, he said.

"We need partners in the field of telecommunications. When we have a joint venture with a foreign company, it does not mean that we surrender our telecommunications business to them.

"We are working with them, acquiring the technology, but we retain control of our own telecom operations in Malaysia," he said after concluding his three-day working visit to Japan.

The prime minister was responding to a question on the proposed merger of Norway's Telenor Group and Axiata Group Bhd of Malaysia.

Telenor, the parent company of Malaysia-listed Digi.Com Bhd, and Axiata recently announced that they were in talks to merge their operations in South-East Asia and South Asia to create a company with 300 million customers in nine countries.

Telenor is expected to own 56.5% of the merged company based on equity value while Axiata would own 43.5%.

Dr Mahathir also repeated there is no basis for concern about the use of Huawei's 5G infrastructure in Malaysia.

He also said that it was necessary to continue using the service of the Chinese telecom giant to bolster Malaysia's quest for techno-

logical advancement.

"Huawei, as we know, is a high-tech company, especially in telecommunications. They do a lot of research and have built sophisticated mobile phones to achieve the 5G stage.

"Their products are much better than others, especially compared to American mobile phones.

"Maybe people in the United States are afraid of spying by Huawei.

"But in Malaysia, there is nothing to spy on, certainly not in terms of industrial technologies. So we welcome them, we work with them, and we acquire their technology," Dr Mahathir said.

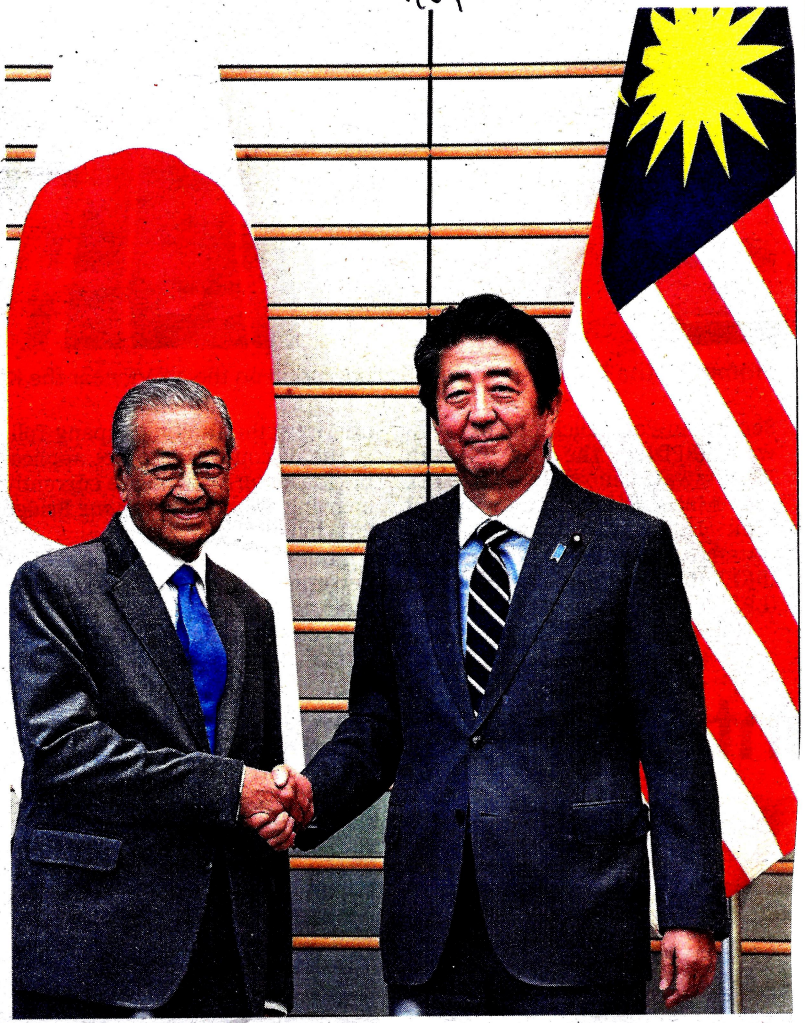
Yesterday, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was unperturbed with the allegation of spying levelled against Huawei and would continue to make use of the latter's technology as much as possible.

Asked if the country was now taking a softer stance towards China as reflected by his decision on Huawei, Dr Mahathir said it was a reasonable stand.

"We want to be friendly with all the countries in the world; we do not want to be at war with people. We know their strengths and we know our weaknesses," he said.

Meanwhile, Dr Mahathir said 19 Japanese companies from various sectors, ranging from health to financial services, have expressed their desire to expand their business or invest in new projects in Malaysia.

Dr Mahathir attended the Malaysia-Japan Business Dialogue, jointly organised by the Malaysian



Trading partners: Dr Mahathir meeting Abe in Tokyo during the PM's working visit to Japan. — Bernama

Investment Development Authority and Japan External Trade Organisation on Thursday.

The dialogues included top Japanese companies such as Mitsubishi Corporation, Sumitomo Corporation, Sankyu, Mitsui & Co,

Kawasaki Heavy Industries and NEC.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir held a meeting with his Japanese counterpart, Shinzo Abe who also gave his assurance to help Malaysia rejuvenate its economy. — Bernama