

**Copyright 2005 Jiji Press Ltd.
Jiji Press Ticker Service**

December 3, 2005, Saturday

LENGTH: 498 words

**Japan, China Reconciliation Needed for East Asian Community:
Mahathir**

Japan and China should overcome their historical enmity and join hands in bringing about an "East Asian Community," visiting former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad said Saturday.

Citing an example of historic reconciliation between France and Germany, Mahathir asked, "Can't we do the same, we Asians, Japan and China in particular? Must we allow the mistakes of the past to determine our future forever?"

He made the remarks in a speech before students at Waseda University after receiving an honorary doctorate the same day.

The remarks came ahead of the inaugural East Asia Summit, in Malaysia on Dec. 14, where participating countries are expected to discuss regional cooperation and an eventual East Asian Community.

Mahathir indicated his opposition to visits to Yasukuni Shrine by Japanese political leaders, rejecting provocative acts that would revive memories of past conflicts and enmity.

China has refused to hold top-level meetings with Japan since Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi made his latest visit to the Tokyo shrine in October. The Shinto shrine honors 14 Class-A war criminals along with 2.4 million people who died fighting for Japan.

"Japan still refuses to admit the wrongs it committed in the past," Mahathir said.

"East Asia is in disarray," he added.

Mahathir, prime minister of Malaysia between 1981 and 2003, added that there is no need to fear China. He urged to find a way to live with the rising power instead.

"China has 1.3 billion very hard-working, very intelligent, and very skillful people. You cannot stop it forever. It is bound to develop at some stage," he said.

He stressed the need to bring about an East Asian Community and make it a balancing force against the United States and the European Union.

He has called for forming such a community since 1990 after realizing that Southeast Asia was not strong enough to compete on its own in the global economy and that it needed to partner with Northeast Asia.

"For some time now, we have been trying to promote an East Asian economic group. We need this even more now since we cannot bring back a bipolar world," he said.

"Only Asians can provide a check against absolute domination of the world by Europeans (and their descendants)," he added.

Mahathir expressed his opposition to including non-East Asian countries, such as Australia and New Zealand, in a future East Asian Community.

"The East Asia Community should be confined to peoples and countries in East Asia," he said. "Even then, it's not very easy. The countries in Northeast Asia have not been able to work together as well as the countries of Southeast Asia," he said.

Mahathir proposed granting membership to Australia and New Zealand when they become more "culturally East" and accept the principle of noninterference.

Western countries tend to believe as if "they know all the answers and therefore they should go and tell people this is how you run your country," he said.

LOAD-DATE: December 03, 2005