



DR MAHATHIR

'Asean won't become military bloc'

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WE DON'T WANT HOSTILITY: P M

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — Asean will not become a military alliance although bilateral arrangements can be made.

"We do not want to attract hostility from other people," Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad says in an interview published in the latest issue of *Newsweek* magazine.

To a suggestion that Asean already faces potential threats, with Russian bases in Vietnam and Vietnamese troops in Kampuchea, the Prime Minister replied: "If America finds it difficult to handle the Soviets, I doubt whether the alliance of the six Asean countries can do very much.

"There are other ways of handling the situation than forming a military alliance."

The Prime Minister discusses a variety of topics in the interview,

ranging from Asean and Malaysian-US relations to the Look East policy and his administration.

He also does not think that Asean would evolve into a lull-fledged economic alliance.

"A lot of people assumed that when Asean was formed it would become an economic community, but it is not easy to be involved in a Common Market type of set-up because the nations involved are so different.

"For example, Indonesia has 150 million people and heavy tariff rates, while Singapore has two million or three million people and no tariffs.

"It's very difficult to equalise this sort of situation."

Describing Kuala Lumpur's relations with Washington as 'friendly' Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir says: "The United States is the single

biggest economic unit, and so whatever happens to the US economy has a direct bearing on Malaysia.

"Therefore, we must have some tangible relationship with America."

On the motivation behind the Look East policy, the Prime Minister says: "When we said 'Look East', we were not looking to the East for supplies or to give them contracts."

"We are thinking about the work ethic and systems of management, plus the loyalty, discipline and dedication. These are values we think can help us develop Malaysia."

Asked if the Government's Islamisation programme was another way of instilling such values, he says: "Well, yes, if you interpret Islam correctly. There is a lot of confusion in the Western mind about

what Islam is all about. "For most Western people, Islam is represented by an intolerant attitude toward everybody hanging people, chopping off their hands and all of that. But Islam is much more than that.

"Islam means tolerance. It means discipline and loyalty. These are values propagated by Islam.

"When we talk about absorbing Islamic values, we are talking about these things."

Impatient

The Prime Minister also says that "outsiders have read more things into this (the recent) constitutional crisis than have those who are really involved in this."

He adds that if at all the Government's relations with the royal houses become strained as a result of this 'crisis' it "would be very, very temporary."

"Malaysia has a great deal of resilience. After 1969 people had written off Malaysia, and you know what the results are today."

How is the country different under your rule than under your three predecessors?

The Prime Minister's reply: "It is a question of emphasis and style.

"The policy is still basically the same, but I must admit to being rather impatient as I want to see things done.

"If things aren't done, I descend like a ton of bricks on the people who don't do the job they are supposed to do.

"Perhaps people see me as rather crude and brash, but we are not all made the same."