

# The bases of Asean peace and security

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MANILA, Mon. — Asean today reaffirmed its faith in economic and social progress as foundations for peace and security and rejected the possibility of it evolving into a regional collective security arrangement or military alliance.

The member countries refused to be coerced into such or similar arrangement by the regional major power rivalries and the presence of the superpowers but, because of them, are determined to work for the speedier realisation of Zopfan (zone of peace, freedom and neutrality). \*

Asean leaders, in their speeches at the opening session of the Third Asean Summit, attested their firmer commitment to making South-East Asia a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality through international endorsement, especially by the big powers in the light of recent developments in the region.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad spoke of Malaysia's commitment to Zopfan and said that it was imperative that further efforts be made to effect its early realisation.

He recognised the roles of the major powers in the region but said their legitimate interests and their positive contributions in the region could be enhanced if South-East Asia "remained free from intra-regional conflict and major power rivalry".

Dr Mahathir alluded to the unfavourable situation for peace and stability in the region due to the new correlation in strategic interests and the military presence of the superpowers.

The need for closer economic co-operation was the reason for the summit, but security was the main item of discussion during the closed session.

Dr Mahathir said Asean had been successful in facing the security challenges posed by developments in the region because "of our belief that to win friends, one should not create enemies.

"Our major concern, rightly, has been and should continue to be the promotion of Asean economic co-operation."

Members of Asean face different sets of international security problems and their successful containment "remains crucial to our development".

In this regard, Dr Mahathir said Asean co-operation in the economic areas could positively contribute towards enhancing "our national security".

He mentioned drug abuse and illicit trafficking as a common threat and called for the need to remain steadfast in the fight against the menace.

On the economy, Dr Mahathir warned of the possible breakdown of the international system should the present trend towards protectionism persist.

He said Asean should increase its efforts in safeguarding its long-term interests in the commodities sector.

"There is now an urgent need for Asean to give special emphasis to commodity issues by reviewing and re-structuring of the Asean machinery to accommodate the commodity sector."

The Prime Minister said Asean should consider encouraging the wider participation of the private sector in the activities of Asean.

In this regard, he complimented the Group of 14 for its efforts in augmenting the preparatory work carried out by the Ministers and officials.

He felt encouraged that the private sector had taken a keen and active interest in the preparations for this summit.