

MPs told: Help ensure stability

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By NURAINA SAMAD

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — The Prime Minister today described those who undermine stability in the pursuit of dubious democratic rights and those who ignore the well-being of the majority as acting against the interest of their country or even democracy.

"For these reasons, communists and extremists are not allowed to use democratic processes in order to destroy democracy," he said.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said in view of this Members of Parliament of Asean countries had a role to play in promoting better understanding of the limitations and responsibilities of democracy as much as they must promote the benefits to be derived from the system.

Opening the 9th general assembly of the Asean Inter-Parliamentary Organisation (AIPO) at Parliament House, he said the parliamentary institutions and legislative processes in Asean reflected the people's will and the diverse historical and cultural backgrounds to which they were heirs.

He said while democratic and parliamentary

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institutions and processes were growing in a meaningful way, they had not, however, escaped the pressures and the tensions created by the cultural, ethnic and religious diversity within each of the Asean countries.

"They have not yet become totally immunised against the sporadic attacks of adventurous dreamers, of tunnel-visioned proponents of alien concepts and of plain anti-social forces," he added.

Dr Mahathir said while they would in time become immune, Asean countries must hold intact the fundamentals of their nationhood.

"In the end, democratic and parliamentary processes have to ensure our people the peace and security that they are entitled to," he added.

The Prime Minister said Members of Parliament in Asean countries must contribute towards stability in the region to ensure rapid development.

He said although countries in the region have succeeded in mastering the intricacies of democracy and at the same time developed rapidly, there was still much to be done.

"We should not gloat over our successes, nor should we rest satisfied with them. There is still much to be done to develop our countries.

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"For this we need stability.

"Members of Parliament must know this and must contribute towards stability," he told the delegates.

He said Asean's solidarity and achievement were the result of understanding, goodwill and co-operation.

Dr Mahathir also said the forging of a common stand and collective will on matters of vital concern to Asean were only outward signs of the quiet progress that had been achieved in building cohesion and co-operation among member countries.

"The going has not been entirely smooth. The challenges that have emerged from time to time have tested our collective will as well as the resilience within our countries and in the region as a whole.

"Our success reflects the high priority that each country has placed on Asean and its viability. As parliamentarians, you have a high duty to entrench this priority and progress," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said Asean countries must continue to achieve greater intra-regional co-operation in trade and industry so that they would be less dependent on markets outside their control.

He said unfavourable global trading conditions, compounded by protectionist trends in the developed countries had caused difficulties for all developing countries, including those in Asean.

Dr Mahathir also urged AIPO to deliberate on crucial issues, like the Palestinian problem and apartheid in South Africa, in the interest of not only regional but also world peace.

He said Malaysia strongly and emphatically condemned the Tel Aviv regime for its cruelties against Palestinians in the occupied territories.

"Malaysia calls on the regime to immediately abide by international norms and practice and to respect the inalienable right of the Palestinians to a national homeland so that permanent peace and stability could be achieved in West Asia," he said.

On South Africa, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia felt strongly that South Africa be completely ostracised for its treatment of blacks in the country.

"The excuse that ostracisation of South Africa would hurt the blacks more than the whites has been disproved by the realities we see today."

Dr Mahathir also reiterated Malaysia's total commitment to the fight against dadah abuse.

He also called for worldwide effort to implement the comprehensive programme recommended by the International Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking (ICDAIT).

He said Malaysia had now become less of a transit country for traffickers because of its tough dadah laws.

Dr Mahathir also touched on the Treaty signed in Washington by US President Ronald Reagan and his Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to eliminate intermediate and short range nuclear missiles.

He said the treaty marked an important step in the reduction of nuclear arms and disarmament.

It could pave the way for a general multilateral disarmament and usher a new era of understanding among countries with differing convictions, he added.

"If this is achieved, then developing countries can divert scarce funds from the purchase of arms to the improvement of the living standards of the people."