

Be ready for second phase, Asean told

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — The Prime Minister said today that Asean must stand ready for the second phase of regional conciliation to create a South-East Asian system of States that are at peace with each other.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad also urged all external powers to come to South-East Asia to play legitimate and constructive roles to the benefit of all.

Delivering the keynote address at the Third Asia-Pacific Roundtable conference here, Dr Mahathir said: "A divided South-East Asia is not in the interest of any regional State."

He said that to prevent hegemonism

from any quarter, Asean must be prepared for a comprehensive and creative engagement of all large powers and also that of Burma, Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea.

He supports transforming Indochina from a battlefield into a marketplace and reiterated that Vietnamese troops must leave Kampuchea.

Dr Mahathir said that a comprehensive settlement of the Kampuchean problem must be one that was moral, viable and productive and which must secure a meaningful place for Prince Norodom Sihanouk.

He said that small States could play an important role in securing peace in the

Asia-Pacific region and cited the formation of Asean as an example.

He said that in the mid-1960s what was now Asean consisted of States that did not know each other, disliked each other or were in a state of confrontation.

"In a creative act of regional reconciliation, the Asean Five decided to create a different world for themselves.

"What exists today is a community, now expanded to six nations, where there is securely in place a structure of understanding and trust, goodwill and active co-operation unprecedented in the history of South-East Asia," Dr Mahathir said.