

Military might won't ensure prosperity and power

PM: Future lies in economic strength

By HO KAY TAT

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — The world is entering an era where prosperity and political power hinge not on military might but on economic strength, the Prime Minister said today.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the foundations of the new era were likely to rest on brains rather than brawn, on the creativity, energy and talents of its people rather than the size of its population and the extent of its territory.

He was delivering the keynote address at the Third Asia-Pacific Roundtable organised by the Institute of Strategic and International Studies here. The theme is *Confidence Building and Conflict Reduction in the Pacific*.

tially between adversaries, economic conflict is most likely to be between friends and allies," Dr Mahathir said.

However, he said, this soft imperialism would not be a zero-sum game if conducted in an enlightened and sustainable manner.

"Much of the virtue of this soft imperialism lies in the fact that the so-called target may aid, abet and certainly welcome its own national extension," he said.

"Indeed, it is a process that promises a wealth of mutual benefit because the interest of the expansionist power is inherently and critically tied to the comprehensive prosperity of the countries which are its targets.

"If I am right, if what we will see in the years ahead are increasing examples of economic expansion and decreasing attempts at military expansionism, then we can expect

-
- FULL TEXT: P12
 - FOCUS ON ROUNDTABLE: P3
-

Dr Mahathir said that increasingly, national prosperity and political power would not hinge on the lands that an army could conquer and the number of people that a nation could subjugate but on, among others, the degree of penetration of markets and the extent to which one country made another dependent on its financial flows, technology and domestic market.

He described this changing trend as "soft imperialism" which could give rise to more conflict as economic primacy and issues gained greater prominence in a country's affairs.

"It is in the nature of economic conflicts that they will be most numerous and most intense as between States that are closely interdependent and deeply interpenetrated.

"Whereas ideological, political and military conflict has been essen-

much more of our future to be determined by the trading State rather than by the garrison and the military State," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that economics was a trend that would surface increasingly as ideological passions were dissipated, the Cold War wound down, and resort to military means reduced.

The big nations, superpowers and the small powers would increasingly turn to economic development and social welfare.

The Prime Minister also said that while there were dangerous elements in the evolving strategic picture, they should not detract from the reality that this was indeed a time of opportunity.

He said that the need of the hour was for enlightened action and creative initiative.