

ASIA KEPT AT BAY FOR FEAR OF COMPETITION: PM

By Rozani Din

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — Some nations are doing their utmost to keep Asian countries at bay for fear they will one day have to face them as competitors. Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said the nations talked about Asia's economic success with "less than good intentions."

"They constantly wag accusing fingers in our direction, saying that our economies have benefited from less than acceptable practices, such as denial of human rights and workers rights, undemocratic governments and disregard for the environment."

"The truth of the matter is Asian countries have saved, invested and taken entrepreneurial risks while others had lost much of their will to do

so," he said, when making his keynote address at the opening of the 17th Asian Advertising Congress here.

Dr Mahathir said developing countries in Asia were constantly seeking to master the production of goods and services that the world wanted and improve upon the technologies which drive them. "This contrasts with the almost insane urge by some developed countries to consume far beyond what they can reasonably afford and to spend enormous sums of money to hone their technologies for war rather than peace," he said.

Dr Mahathir also criticised those who deliberately misinform the world's business community about the potential of Asian countries.

The Prime Minister said the fact that it was only now that the business

community was giving attention to Asia implied a lack of information about the region.

"In this great information age, it is surprising to see how myths about Asia continue to be regurgitated with depressing frequency."

"To most of the Western world, Asian countries are still typical mismanaged, grossly corrupt and undemocratic nations, quite incapable of making progress."

"On the other hand, if they (Asian countries) do make progress they are likely to become economic and military threats to Western domination."

"In actual fact, Asian nations are merely desirous of progress in the western sense and wish to have their share of prosperity."

Dr Mahathir also said that the advertising industry in Asia was set to

boom as the region was fast becoming the mega market of the 90s.

"With so much going on in this region, there are, and will be, tremendous opportunities for advertising people in Asia," he said.

He said the vast natural resources and the huge population of the region meant new markets for the business community to tap.

"In many instances, Asian nations have achieved a considerable degree of affluence and those who know how can obviously sell to them even the least essential goods," he added.

The Prime Minister said it was necessary that ethical codes be maintained by those in the advertising industry.

"This is because advertising skills mean power and sometimes it can be corrupt," he added.