

# All round support for Dr M's speech

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's speech received widespread support from delegates for articulating issues confronting not just Asean but other developing countries as well.

The arguments put forward by Dr Mahathir were "a penetrating analysis of world developments," Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas said.

Mr Alatas said the Prime Minister's words would provide important guidance for the Foreign Ministers during their deliberations in the coming days particularly in their discussion on the role of Asean and its task.

Brunei Foreign Minister Prince Mohamed Bolkiah said Dr Mahathir's arguments on the proposed East Asia Economic Group would provide opportunities for further economic cooperation in the region.

He said his country supported the move in principle as its objectives were not in conflict with those of Asean.

He also supported the Prime Minister's comments on efforts to restructure the Asean secretariat as this would help the group face challenges.

Singapore Foreign Minister Wong Kan Seng described the speech as "very important" and appropriate because Asean had to be prepared for global changes, particularly to the regionalisation of the world community.

This could endanger the open multilateral trading system and consequently the growth of world trade.

Thai Foreign Minister Arsa Sarasin lauded Dr Mahathir's speech saying that it was "lucid and inspiring," and "very constructive."

"It will certainly go a long way for the future of Asean. It was of great importance, particularly the part touching on the free trade area proposal," he said.