

CNS0048

U GE 19-10 00281 EA636

aae tbe

JAPAN IS WRONG IN FEELING INSECURE, SAYS DR M

Mahathir - security

From. Azman Ujang

Ⓟ Dr. M - oversee trips.

TOKYO, Oct 19 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he does not see much sense for Japan to continue to be obligated to the United States for its security simply to comfort itself against perceived threat from big neighbours like China and North Korea.

Dr Mahathir, answering questions from Japanese business leaders at a forum here, posed some hard questions to Japan for leaving it to the US to protect its security and for considering countries like China and North Korea as hostile.

In his usual straight-talking style, the Prime Minister asked: +We accept that Japan has very strong relations with the US and the US has been involved in the security of Japan for a very long time. But for how long will Japan ask the US to protect it. I doubt the US will be in a position to afford protecting Japan.+

Japan should assume its own responsibility with regard to its security, said Dr Mahathir who linked this security question to Japanese attitude of not wanting to make decisions on matters which could upset the US, including Japan's still inconclusive stand on whether to support the proposed East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC) which the US opposes.

+ Is Japan considering China or North Korea hostile? Even if they are, are they, in a position to attack Japan? What benefits are there for these countries to attack Japan?+ said Dr Mahathir who described Japan as over-emphasizing its own sense of insecurity. -- more.

♥19/10/17-26MST

CNS0058

U GE 19-10 00205 EA637

aae tbe

Mahathir - security 2 Tokyo

Dr Mahathir had earlier delivered a keynote address to over 300 top Japanese businessmen at the forum organised by the Institute of Mitsui and Company for Trade and Economic Studies Incorporation, a research organisation of Mitsui, a general trading company with worldwide business.

In his address, he called on Japan to play a more crucial role in ensuring peace and security as well as in addressing economic issues facing the world today.

During the question-and-answer session, Dr Mahathir said by feeling too much insecure and thinking about possible attack from China or North Korea, Japan became very defensive and did not trust others.

He said the time has come for Japan to place more trust on the United Nations instead of the US because even its own bilateral security treaty with the US would not work as other factors would come into play in a complicated situation such as a war.

He drew laughter when he suggested that a way to avoid war would be to pit a country's enemy against the other enemy + as our country did for centuries+ over territorial claims. -- more

♥19/10/17-32MST

CNS0198

U GE 19-10 00256 EA646

aae tbe

Mahathir - security 3. Tokyo

+If the Thais attacked us, we asked the British to be our friends. If the British attacked us, we asked the Thais to help out. I don't know whether this can be done now but the fact is that as a small country, Malaysia must make friends with people and we cannot 'afford to have enemies. +

Dr Mahathir told Japan that if it could help make countries like China and North Korea become more prosperous 'economically, he saw no reason why they should go to war with Japan.

+ Actually the situation (in the East Asian region) used to be very bad especially after the war, but now it is not 'that bad. Countries do not need to attack each other anymore now,+ said the Prime Minister who, in his speech earlier, spoke of the trend now towards rapprochement between North and South Korea and between the two Koreas with China and Russia, and this was cause for optimism.

He said it was enough 'for countries just to have enough sufficient capability to protect themselves because if there was to be a major war, the world would come under attack and not just Japan.

+ Even in the last war, we did nothing to the Japanese but yet we got involved in the war because it was a world war. The next war, if there was going to be one, would be a world 'war. + -- more

▼19/10/18-39MST

CNS0209

U GE 19-10 00213 EA647

aae tbe

Mahathir - security 4 Tokyo

But Dr Mahathir was quick to point out that he did think there was going to be another world war with so many destructive weapons around.

As he put it: +I think people would be crazy to start a world war with so many destructive weapons around. +

The Prime Minister told the businessmen that people's security would in future depend more on negotiations round the table, diplomatic approaches and friendship to reduce the threat of war so that it could not become a factor that could influence the thinking of countries like Japan with regard to the formation of a group like the 'EAEC.

Dr Mahathir again used the opportunity to extol the virtues of the EAEC which he said was designed to be a mere economic grouping and should stop at being just that, without being concerned with ideology or security. +We don't care whether China is communist or Vietnam is communist. As long as they subscribe to free trade, they can join the EAEC. Japan is placing far too much emphasis on security as if we are really under threat. I don't think we are under threat., + he added. -- more

▼19/10/18-47MST

CNS0272

U GE 19-10 00159 EA652

aae tbe

Mahathir - security 5 Tokyo

But Dr Mahathir was then asked why Malaysia was now buying new and sophisticated military hardware if he did not think, countries in the region were under security threat in the wake of the post' Cold War period.

Explaining Malaysia's arms purchases, he said Malaysia was not involved in any arms race as what some foreign news media were suggesting.

+What Malaysia is doing is merely to re-equip our small standing army and replace equipment which have become obsolete,+ he, said.

Malaysia was only aiming to have a credible defence force to protect its own security as any other country would, he said.

Citing an example, the Prime Minister said Malaysia was replacing its fleet of obsolete F-5E fighter aircraft which were acquired when the country's population was 10 million but which had since increased to 18 million. -- more

♥19/10/19-27MST

CNS0276

U GE 19-10 00178 EA653

aae tbe

Mahathir - security 6 Tokyo

+ We had at, first wanted to buy Tornado aircraft from Britain but then we found that we did not have enough money so we are looking around for other sophisticated planes,+ he added.

+Malaysians are very pacific people. We do not quarrel with others but we settle our problems through negotiations,+ said Dr Mahathir.

The Prime Minister said in the case of Malaysia's navy, the need for new equipment was even greater to deal with-acts of piracy, poachers and to cope with the increasing traffic in the Straits of Melaka which has been the scene of frequent accidents lately.

*Actually', Malaysia has a very small standing army compared with our population. So the question of us joining the arms race does not arise,+ he said.

Dr Mahathir, who is on a week-long private visit to Japan, was given a standing ovation at the end of the session, with many businessmen reaching out to shake his hands. -- more

♥19/10/19-29MST

CNS0283

U GE 19-10 00300 EA654'

aae tbe

Mahathir - security 7 (last) **Tokyo**

Some of the businessmen interviewed later praised the Malaysian leader for pulling no punches in his answers to question; which they said contrasted sharply with that of Japanese leaders who +cannot say no when they mean no+ or who use ambiguous words to hide their indecisions.

Goro Watanabe, the executive managing director of Corporate Planning Division of Mitsui and Co. Ltd, which sponsored the forum, praised Dr Mahathir by saying that Japanese businessmen had high regard for his integrity and strong leadership.

But Watanabe was optimistic that despite Japan's +delicate+ economic relationship with the United States, Japan would emerge with its own views on solving its own problems +with our own decisions+ taking into account the interests of the other Asian countries.

+ We have never forgotten the contributions of the United States to Japan but still we have the future of Asia in our mind and we have the responsibility to think seriously of the interest and prosperity of our own region,+ said. Watanabe.

Watanabe said Dr Mahathir's views on regional security threat perceived by Japan 'were +very clear+ and reassuring to businessmen like him.

Another businessman, Takuzo Maeda, who is vice president of Business International, however, said Japan had to balance its delicate economic ties with the United States and its own equally deep interest in trade and business with Asia.

+Japan still has to be very cautious when expressing our views on the EAEC. Other Asian countries should understand we have a very delicate position with the US. This is unavoidable,+ he said.

But Maeda acknowledged that Japan lacked strong political leadership as shown by Dr Mahathir to match its economic superiority. -- Bernama

♥19/10/19-34MST