

CNS7962

R GE 03-02 00232 EG632

aae

Mahathir-security

ECONOMIC PROSPERITY THE ANSWER TO LASTING PEACE, SAYS PM

From Azman Ujang

94
MANILA, Feb 3 (Bernama) -- Economic prosperity is the answer to lasting peace in South East Asia and not military pacts, Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today. o. r. p

Countries need not be unduly worried about their security being threatened by outside power or being conquered by another country but should instead concentrate on enhancing themselves economically, he told a joint press conference with President Fidel Ramos at the Malacanang Palace here.

Answering a question about the approach taken by Malaysia and the Philippines to resolve overlapping claims on part of the Spratly islands in the South China Sea, Dr Mahathir reiterated that Asean countries were not about to go to war with one another just because of border disputes unlike some other countries.

"I don't believe in resorting to wars or to build up powerful navies to beef up security. If countries go for economic prosperity, then each will have a vested interest to ensure its own security and stability and this is the answer to lasting peace in the region," he said.

The Prime Minister said he also did not subscribe to the tendency of perceiving certain countries as enemies but would prefer to regard them as friends. -- more

▼03/02/23-17MST

R GE 03-02 00186 EG633

aae

Mahathir-security 2 Manila

Citing the claims on the Spratlys by the two countries, Dr Mahathir caused laughter when he said: "We don't go to war, at the very least we don't visit each other." He was referring to the previous situation where the heads of government of both countries did not visit each other's country until President Ramos visited Kuala Lumpur last year and his own current visit here.

"I don't think security problems can be resolved by having powerful navies and armies in the region," he said.

President Ramos interjected by saying that both countries had agreed on the peaceful approach to resolve their border problems.

In Dr Mahathir's view, if a country perceived another country as its enemy in the future, the likelihood was that that country would be the enemy now.

On the other hand, a friendly approach among countries would lead to countries looking at one another as friends, adding that "countries don't conquer each other any more because this is already an out of date concept." -- more

▼03/02/23-35MST

R GE 04-02 00184 EG634

aae

Mahathir-security 3 (last) Manila

However, if a country remained poor, it might even think of invading another country in order to acquire the wealth of that country.

"But if all countries can become prosperous, they will all have a vested interest to see that there is stability in the region without resorting to war so that it can guarantee their economic expansion and trade," he said.

Even the fact that countries needed stability in order to trade would make them very much aware of the need to avoid conflict.

The Prime Minister said this was already happening in Asia and cited the case of the Japanese whose investment in Malaysia had made the country to prosper but the Japanese in turn had reaped good returns from their investment.

This was also one reason the Malaysian government encouraged its businessmen to invest overseas so that they would have a vested interest in seeing to the peace and stability of the region in order to safeguard their investment. -- Bernama

AU YBY

♥04/02/00-02MST