

# Towards open regionalism

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By Ahmad A. Talib  
and K.P. Waran

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — Countries in the Pacific region must set up an egalitarian community based on open economic regionalism, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said Malaysia, on its part and as a global citizen, would play an active role in the making of a new world community based on egalitarianism, mutual respect and justice.

"I believe what we must build is a Pacific community that is robust and that will endure, not a temporary Pacific association of convenience or a Pacific construct erected over a transient enthusiasm or a Pacific club or organisation with a single purpose or interest, an appendage to someone, something that is here today and gone tomorrow ....

"I believe that what we must build is a Pacific *Gemeinschaft*, a Pacific village or family or group of friends, not an artificial, Cartesian construct — legalistic, over-structured and over-institutionalised.

"If this is our vision, obviously we have more to learn from the patient wisdom of our traditional culture, the stamina of the long-distance runner and the simple brick-layer who builds a house brick by brick, than the philosophy of Rene Descartes and the most magical builder of the house of cards."

Dr Mahathir said this in his opening address at the 10th International General Meeting of the Pacific Economic Co-operation Council.

He said Malaysia would do what had to be done even if there was a price to be paid.

"As a fervent believer in

the need to enrich and strengthen Pacific interdependence and co-operation, I also believe that the nations of the Pacific, the business enterprises of the Pacific, the intellectual leaders of the Pacific — all of us in the Pacific — each in our own way, should work hard to contribute to the making of a productive community of co-operative peace and prosperity in the Pacific."

He said egalitarianism was not an illusion founded on departure from realities. "Nor does it deny the need for leadership. The leaders must lead. But leadership, too, must be within the framework of mutual respect and mutual benefit.

"I believe that it is also important to ensure a Pacific community that is democratic and consensual and that works on the basis of democratic and consensual

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principles — however frustrating democracy is; however, infuriatingly difficult consensus may sometimes be to secure.

"We should also be strongly committed to the objective of making sure that the Pacific community that we build conforms to the imperatives of open regionalism. This, of course, is a central theme of this conference."

Dr Mahathir told the international participants that the Asia Pacific journey to full trust, empathy and respect was one of a thousand miles, with very few safe short-cuts.

"There are no bullet trains. We must be prepared often to go on foot despite the inconvenience.

"So many ties have to be  
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## Patience and persistence vital, says Dr M

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established, so many webs have to be weaved, so many chasms have to be bridged. The work — so full of frustrations — has to be done with patience and persistence.

"Rome was not built in a day. A true Pacific community cannot be built in a

decade. We must think in terms of decades. We must find the stamina to stay on course.

"We must understand at the same time that the building of a true community cannot be a monopoly of bureaucrats or Governments meeting intermittently. It can only be built

by a million hands, working everyday and every hour of the day.

"Indeed, right or wrong, it is the private sector, the business person pursuing growth and profit (not officials armed to the teeth with the best of intentions, laws, regulations, frameworks and authority, or politicians and statesmen who strut

the great stage of international play) who have the greatest contribution to the making of the Pacific economic community.

"It is the intellectual and media leaders, like so many of you in the audience, who must help to build the needed community of the mind and of the heart."