

PM: We'll continue to speak out boldly

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By SHAHANA AZ SHER HABIB

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia will continue to voice its views firmly and boldly in the international arena in the interests of justice, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

The Prime Minister said it was not the country's intention to promote itself by speaking out at international forums.

"It is because we stand firm on principles," he said at a ceremony to congratulate and pledge loyalty to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Ja'afar in conjunction with the King's 72nd birthday.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia would continue to play its role in the international scene effectively.

"We will continue to oppose injustices, cruelty and am-twisting imposed on weak countries," the Prime Minister said.

Dr Mahathir said that in line with the country's principles to contribute towards international peace, Malaysia had sent its forces to serve under the United Nations peacekeeping force in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Somalia and Cambodia.

He also believed that Malay-

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Find new markets, private sector told

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sians were now more committed to maintaining racial unity and harmony.

"The racial and religious conflicts in other countries where many lives are lost, and homes and belongings destroyed have surely made our people more aware of how important it is to maintain unity among the races," he said.

On economic development, Dr Mahathir said the private sector should also invest overseas for long-term benefits.

He said the sector had to be more dynamic and aggressive in exploring new markets while at the same time increasing its efficiency, productivity and competitiveness.

The Government, he added, had tried to create a suitable climate for business and investment and had taken steps to modernise the infrastructure.

Dr Mahathir said the country had achieved a growth rate of more than eight per cent for the past six years along with stable prices and low inflation.

He assured that the Government would continue to take steps to control the increase of prices to ensure that incomes were not affected by inflation.

Dr Mahathir also said it was necessary for the country to increase its competitive advantage for greater success.

The country was now placed 19th among trading countries and its competitive edge was low labour costs, he added.

Dr Mahathir stressed that it was essential to ensure that labour costs did not increase but that income would, through higher productivity.

He claimed there were already attempts by the West to destroy the lower labour cost advantage here.