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Mahathir-East Asia

CREATE EAST ASIAN ZONE OF PEACE, STABILITY AND PROSPERITY, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug. 5 (Bernama) --- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called for the creation of an East Asian Zone of Peace, Stability and Prosperity modeled along the lines of Asean.

The Prime Minister said if East Asian nations could achieve this, they might change the course of history and, directly, the future of more than a quarter of mankind in the east; indirectly, the destiny of mankind.

"Asean can be a base and an example of a much wider East Asian co-operation," he said in his keynote address at the first East Asian Young Leaders Congress organised by the UMNO Youth Movement under the auspices of the Barisan Nasional Youth Wing at the Putra World Trade Centre, here.

More than 100 participants from Brunei, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, North Korea, the Philippines, South Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and Malaysia are attending the eight-day meeting.

Dr Mahathir said choosing to build an East Asian region of peace did not mean turning away from other concerns, other interests and other regions.

"We should not, indeed we could not, for all of us are trading nations... we need the rest of the world, as the richer they are the better customers they will be," he added. -- more

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He said in order to build an East Asian region of peace, friendship and tranquility there were many things that East Asian nations must be prepared to do "unilaterally."

Among them were reassuring their neighbours, abiding by the rules of international law, negotiating instead of confrontating, ensuring domestic stability and order, behaving with sensitivity and responsibility, and leading by example.

Dr Mahathir said all of East Asia would become a region of amity and goodwill if the nations could build a seamless web of friendly bilateral relations.

"But, first let us ensure that the present peaceful relations between East Asian states is prolonged... we must now actively promote peace between us and peace amongst us," he added.

Citing the ancient Romans who said, "To have peace you must prepare for war," Dr Mahathir said "but really we cannot afford to spend so much on military preparedness."

He said today's weapons systems were too costly and East Asian nations would be bankrupting themselves trying to deter each other.

"We will be creating tension, and tension between nations do not encourage economic investments and long term development plans. We will not have the money for development," he added. -- more

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He said it should be the adage of the modern East Asia that "if you want peace, prepare for peace, work for peace, fight for peace -- fight for peace with the resolve and the resources that are generally reserved by nations for the prosecution of war."

Dr Mahathir said East Asian nations had no choice but to do a great many things at the same time if they wished to contribute to peace.

Just as he believed in the importance of ensuring an East Asian system of co-operative peace, he also believed in an East Asian system of co-operative prosperity.

He added: "We will compete against each other and we must compete against each other. But, we must also co-operate with each other.

"And we must establish processes of co-operative prosperity with each other, especially as our competition mounts, especially as our enormous interdependence escalates." -- more

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This was the reason why Malaysia proposed the idea of the East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC).

Dr Mahathir said for much of the world's history, Asia was the centre of human civilisation and had contributed considerably to the development of the human society and its civilisation.

He called on the young leaders of East Asian nations, as movers and makers of the region's future, to prepare to play a role in making Asia once again the most important "cradle of human civilisation."

He said: "It is time to dedicate ourselves to a non-confrontationist, non-xenophobic Asian Resurgence, a movement driven not by the outside or by resentment or anger but by our own ambitions for our own people, our own countries, and our own region.

"It is time to commit ourselves to that long and awesome process whose final destination should be a durable and comprehensive Asian Renaissance founded on the finest traditions of Asia and on Asian ethics." -- more

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Dr Mahathir said the challenges were enormous and much would depend on how much peace, stability and prosperity they could generate for their people and for the region in the decades to come.

Earlier, Umno Youth chief Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Thamby Chik, in his address, said the young leaders of the East Asian nations must be fully aware of the fact that they should be in full control in determining their nations' future.

"The young generation of East Asia has that tremendous thinking power that should be nurtured and coaxed into productive action," he added.

Also present was Barisan Nasional and Umno secretary-general Datuk Mohamed Rahmat, the Information Minister. -- Bernama

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