

# Dr M: East Asian nations must actively promote peace

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said the present peaceful relations between East Asian countries should be maintained and called on them to promote peace.

"We must now actively promote peace between us and among us," the Prime Minister said when opening the First East Asian Young Leaders Congress at the Putra World Trade Centre.

However, he said they should not let the accident of peace be allowed to end in another accident, that of war.

He said the ancient Romans stated that: "To have peace you must prepare for war."

"But really we cannot afford to spend so much on

military preparedness. Today's weapons systems are just too costly," he said adding that the countries would be bankrupting themselves trying to deter each other.

He said they would be creating tensions; and tensions between nations did not encourage economic investments and long-term development plans.

He said it should be the adage of the modern East Asia that: if you want peace — fight for peace with the resolve and the resources that are generally reserved by nations for the preparation of war.

He said there were many things that the countries must do unilaterally in the cause of co-operative peace to build an East Asian region of peace, friendship

and tranquillity.

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

"All of East Asia will become a region of amity and goodwill if we can build a seamless web of friendly bilateral relations.

"There are things that we can do at the United Nations and at the global level in pursuit of our commitment to co-operative peace.

"There are contributions to be made at the multilateral level, in terms of the smaller region and in terms of the bigger region of East

Asia," Dr Mahathir said.

However, he said those in the Asean community could never neglect Asean. Asean can be a base and an example of a much wider East Asian co-operation, he added.

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. The richer they are the better customers they will be," he said.

Fortunately, he said nations could do many things at the same time and East Asia had no choice but to do a great many things at the

same time if they wished to make the necessary contribution to peace, or committed to peace.

He said East Asian countries had almost all done well, if not very well. The East Asian regional economy is integrating at a remarkable rate and is rising at breath-taking speed.

In purchasing power parity terms, East Asia is already the largest regional economy in the world, bigger than the Western European or the North America Free Trade Agreement (Nafta) regional economy.

"In US dollars, we will enter the 21st century being the largest regional economy in the world," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Asean history had for too many hundreds of years been an

appendage of European history.

"Our lives have for much too long been too dependent on the events and aspirations of nations elsewhere.

"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," he said.