

Dr M calls on Japan to wean itself from US

TOKYO, Sun. — Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has called on Japan to pull back from leaning toward the United States and play a global role as a great economic power, a Japanese newspaper reported today.

Japan should build up its relations with East Asia on an equal footing with the United States and Europe, he was quoted as saying yesterday in an interview in the *Tokyo Shimbun*.

Japan at present belittles its relations with Asia and places them below its ties with the United States in terms of priority, Dr Mahathir added.

He also renewed a call for Japan to join an East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC), which the Malaysian premier has proposed as a forum on trade and investment excluding such regular Asia-Pacific partners as the United States and Canada.

Japan can be an EAEC member and part of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) grouping at the same time, he said. He cited the fact that the United States, Canada and Mexico, all Apec members, are also signatories to the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Dr Mahathir said that the two previous Apec summits had decided on draft declarations without all member countries being consulted or debating the issues.

He said Malaysia would attend the third Apec summit in Osaka in November if it could take part in the process of drafting a declaration, according to the newspaper. — AFP