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Mahathir - Waseda

ASIA MUST SPEAK UP TO ENJOY PEACE AND PROSPERITY

By: Syed Jamil Jaafar

TOKYO, March 27 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Asia must speak up, instead of just going along with European views, to enjoy peace and prosperity in the next century.

He said divided and uncoordinated, the emerging economies of Asia had so far been unable to effectively have a say in the political and economic affairs of their own countries and certainly not in the world.

'We are going along with the dominant European views regardless of their mistakes in the past and the possibility of their making a mistake again now,' he said.

'If in the end all their systems, political and economic, are proven wrong, then obviously we will all have to pay a price.'

Dr Mahathir, advocate of the East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC), was speaking on 'The Future of Asia and The Role of Japan: Challenges of the 21st Century to Youth' at Waseda University.

The Prime Minister arrived here on Tuesday for a four-day official visit to Japan.

He said already the Western thinkers were predicting clashes of civilisations.

The pressures on China and South East Asia were causing bitterness as they obstructed the growth and development of these countries while the carping criticisms of human rights records and environmental pollution and the linking of these with trade would be much resented.

Dr Mahathir said tensions would rise, threats hurled and unpleasant incidents would colour the relations between East and West.

'One day someone might do something stupid and economic pursuits will be replaced with political and even military confrontations,' he said.

'All these may seem rather pessimistic. But all these things can happen. They can happen because the only people who can do something to stop it will not act.

'And the only people are the Asians, the countries of Asia, specifically East Asia.'

But so far Asia had refused to do anything in concert, worrying that the Europeans on both sides of the Atlantic might not like it.

Dr Mahathir said this was the wrong way to ensure a peaceful and glorious 21st century.

'Asia must be willing to confront the Europeans across the table now if it wants to avoid confronting them in other arenas later,' the Prime Minister said.

Stressing that he was not talking about military confrontation, Dr Mahathir said Asia could create a counterbalance to lighten the existing heavy-handedness.

The Asians could prevail simply by arguing their case together to counter the tendency of the Europeans to impose their systems and their will on the world.

Dr Mahathir said the role of Japan was obvious as the country was the most advanced nation of Asia.

Japan, he said, should play its rightful role in world affairs and set a good example for Asia by taking up the issues of concern to Asian countries.

'It should cease to consider itself a western developed nation in the East. Japan has the credibility to lead, not towards Asian domination in an

Asian century, but towards a more equitable world community in the Century of the World which is dawning on us," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the youths of the 21st century must think of themselves as true citizens of the world and discard the baggage of history.

They must forget colour and creed and notions of superiority or inferiority.

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