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Dr M: Obliterate weapons of mass destruction to ensure prosperity

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has suggested that weapons of mass destruction be obliterated in order to make the 21st Century one that will ensure prosperity.

Outlining his aspirations for the new millennium, Dr Mahathir said if the world believed in prosperity as the weapon against war, then they would not need such weapons of mass destruction and no one should be allowed to possess or develop them.

However, Dr Mahathir said there would still be a need for weapons to deal with criminals, pirates, drug smugglers, white slaves and the like.

Therefore, he suggested that a new arms industry which produced non-lethal weapons be created to deal with them.

"We don't need to kill them. We need to be able to paralyse them... to immobilise them from a distance.

"Laser technology, blinding light and loud explosions have all been invented and used effectively."

He said more more research could be done in non-lethal but effective weapons for use in bushfire wars, for neutralising lethal weapons in the hands of warring parties or armed criminals, for exploding mines from a distance and for self protection.

"We will hold exhibitions to promote the sale of such weapons, of aircraft which fight fires and cause rain to fall, of ways of creating clouds and moving them to the right places, to render deserts fertile, to cool the atmosphere, reduce humidity and cause snowfalls.

"New weapons will attack storms and hurricanes, calm the seas, generate power and tame volcanoes and other natural catastrophes.

"Although it may sound fanciful, who predicted the powerful microchips, the laptops, the laser beams and others? No one really. But they were discovered, harnessed and developed," Dr Mahathir said.

The Prime Minister, who is a great believer in human ingenuity, said the most important thing was to identify and recognise the problem or set the objective. And then the concerned politicians would allocate the necessary resources and in time the solution would be found or the weapon would be invented.

Dr Mahathir was speaking at the opening of the Aerospace International Conference at Hotel Helang.

The three-day conference, organised by Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute, is being held in conjunction with Lima '97 which began yesterday.

Speaking on the topic Asia and the World Century: Prospects for peace, progress and prosperity, Dr Mahathir, who said he was not a futurist but admitted being a dreamer who believed in ideals, said the 21st century should be a century of the world, a new world and a single commonwealth of nations which excluded no country or community but one which included all of humanity.

"This new world century should be characterised by true liberte, egalite and fraternite, both at home and within the comity of nations."

It must consist of nations and people who are responsible, productive, democratic as well as able to show greater mutual respect, appreciation, consideration and concern for the interests and feelings of others.

It will also be one where great efforts are made by the rich to assist the poor in the noble endeavour to enrich one and all.

Dr Mahathir also debunked the idea of an Asian century.

Stressing that his views had nothing to do with the present currency problems, the Prime Minister said there would not be an Asian century and Asian dominance even though Asian values would remain to enrich the world in the new century.

Dr Mahathir said by speaking out against the Asian century, it did not mean Asia did not have a vital role to play.

Relating the unprecedented period of peace and prosperity experienced by the Asian region, particularly the Asia Pacific region, Dr Mahathir said he was aware there were many cynics who were waiting expectantly for the Asian economies, or more precisely the South East Asian economies, to stumble and fall.

"No doubt we are facing new challenges as a result of the currency and market turbulence. This setback, I must insist, is only temporary and transient.

"I am confident, given the general resilience of the Asean region and its strong economic fundamentals, we will bounce back to emerge stronger and more robust.

"We have never been quitters. We are not going to be diverted from the primacy of economics and our commitment to pragmatism".

Dr Mahathir also spoke on the need for Asia to be able to manage reform and deal with changes in a borderless and more integrated world and future challenges.

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