

03/12/1997

Switch production to non-lethal weapons: PM

IN ASPIRING to make the 21st century one of prosperity for the world, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad suggested yesterday a reduction in manufacturing and sales of conventional weapons, producing instead those which are non-lethal.

Speaking at the opening of the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace (Lima) exhibition, Dr Mahathir said if the world believes in prosperity as the weapon against war, they will not need the kind of lethal weapons currently produced and sold.

"But, we will need weapons against criminals, pirates, drug smugglers, white slavery and the like ... not to kill them but to paralyse them, to immobilise them from a distance," he added.

Noting that laser technology, blinding light and loud explosions have all been invented and used effectively, he said more can be done, such as research on non-lethal but effective weapons.

"The non-lethal weapons can be used in bush fire wars, neutralising lethal weapons in the hands of warring parties or armed criminals, for exploding mines from a distance and for self-protection."

Therefore, a new arms industry can be created but the arms will not be those that can cause mass destruction, he added.

"We will hold exhibitions to promote the sales 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 snowfall.

"New weapons will attack storms and hurricanes, calm the seas, generate power and tame volcanoes and other catastrophes," Dr Mahathir said, adding that the production of such weapons may sound fanciful, but he is a great believer in human ingenuity.

"The next century should see a world bent on creating and sharing wealth and resources for everyone.

"It is an insult to civilisation that despite our intelligence and resources, there are so many who still live in poverty and misery. We are still in the Dark Ages," Dr Mahathir said.

Maintaining that the next century will not be an "Asian Century", Dr Mahathir, however, said this does not mean the region will not have a vital role to play in ensuring peace and prosperity in the world.

He said Asia, particularly the Asia-Pacific region, is experiencing an unprecedented period of peace and prosperity.

"There is also a growing trend and inclination among regional states to enhance dialogue on political cooperation and cooperation for peace and coexistence," he said.

In addition, Asia is considered to be the most dynamic region of the world in terms of economic growth, currency turmoil notwithstanding.

"The Asia we know today is vastly different from what it was at the beginning of the current century.

"Some of the most dynamic economies like China, Taiwan, South Korea and Japan were once ravaged by war and famine and were bereft of essential technologies and skills.

"But over the last quarter of this century, Asia has produced more economic growth for more countries than any other region in the history of mankind.

"I am confident this trend will continue," he said.

Meanwhile, Dr Mahathir took two hours off his busy schedule in Langkawi to tour exhibition booths at the aerospace segment of Lima '97.

Among those he visited were Airod, Bombardier, Bristol Aerospace, Eurocopter, TR Group of Companies, Sapura, Kaman and Daimler Benz.

Dr Mahathir also met up with Brunei Finance Minister Pengiran Jefri Bolkiah, who is in Langkawi for Lima '97.

(END)