

02 DEC 1999

Mahathir-Asia

ASIAN NATIONS SHOULD FORGET PAST AND MOVE FORWARD, SAYS PM

LANGKAWI, Dec 2 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has again stressed that Asian countries should forget the wars fought between them more than 50 years ago.

In Europe, he said, the traditional enemies were already working together.

"We should not harp on the past, the wars between former enemies, or we could never sit down and work together. We should forget the past and start anew in this new millennium," he said.

Speaking at a dialogue session after opening the Lima '99 international aerospace conference here today, he said: "We should not maintain the stance that we cannot trust China".

For example, he said, if a country started to build military forces to protect themselves from China, then China would also build security forces to defend themselves. The arms race would go on and on, when the huge sums of money to build up the defences were required by the poor people, he said.

"If we keep reminding that 50 years ago somebody was killed in this place, therefore we should not have anymore dealings with this country, we will not get anywhere. We should be prepared to forget the past and look into the future and what is good for us. We could cooperate securitywise and in fact, develop our own Asian helicopters or airbus and the like," he said.

He said the technology could be better converted to many peaceful use and to develop a cooperation in ways of saving more lives.

As such, he said, weapons should not be made more sophisticated than they already were and the makers should reduce the concentration on ways and means of killing people but instead try saving people in making the sea lanes and airspace safe for them to travel.

"Their technology can be converted to many peaceful use that they are not going to lose if they set their minds on how to avoid war by developing more cooperative efforts in ways to save human lives and make lives happy," he said.

Referring to the proposed Asian security regime, Dr Mahathir said it should begin with dialogues among Asian countries and help them forget previous conflicts, especially among former enemies.

He said the new security regime should not be in terms of preparing East Asia for eventual war with the United States or Europe.

The security regime should act against piracy and lawlessness that transcended international boundaries, he added.

-- BERNAMA

TM RM