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PM urges refined regional security structure

IN VIEW of the critical importance of preserving peace and harmony in the region, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday called for a refined regional security structure that involves every nation in Asia.

"A clear and definite security structure can help save resources, minimising unnecessary duplication and at the same time fostering closer cooperation among the nations.

"China and Japan can together help ensure peace and stability in this region, something that will not only reduce wasteful expenditure on arms but will enhance intra-regional trade and investments," Dr Mahathir said in his keynote address when opening the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace 1999 aerospace and maritime conferences at Porto Malai in Langkawi yesterday.

He said the world has enough sophistication in weapons of destruction to wipe out millions and destroy the planet. What is needed now is the sophistication in equipment which can make life safe for everyone, especially when they travel.

"Peace-keeping needs should focus not on the possibility of military conflicts between nations but on keeping the sea lanes and air space free of piracy and hijackings, on better search and rescue equipment and drills, on cross-border fire fighting, on how to rescue the innocent hostages of hijackings and piracy, on making ships manned by small crews safe from boarding by unauthorised people, and on many other things which can make transport of goods and passengers safer."

Later, at a dialogue with conference participants, Dr Mahathir said the new security regime should begin with Asean's 10 members and China, Japan and South Korea.

He said these countries should develop cooperative efforts, not in terms of preparing East Asia for eventual war with the US or Europe but making the world a better place to live in.

These countries, however, will have to put their past behind them and look forward to the future. "Countries in Asia must forget the war 50 years ago. If we keep on talking and apologising about it, we will not be able to move forward," the Prime Minister said.

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