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Sign N-pact, Dr M urges nuclear powers

Kamarul Yunus in Beijing

BEIJING, Fri: Nuclear powers have nothing to fear from China and should instead emulate Beijing in ratifying the protocol to create a nuclear weapon-free zone in South-East Asia, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad says.

"We feel that the others (nuclear power nations) should rethink... if China is prepared to accept nuclear weapon curbs in South-East Asia, I do not see why the others cannot do the same," he told a news conference for Malaysian and foreign journalists at the end of his three-day working visit to China today.

The Prime Minister was asked about the South-East Asia nuclear weapon-free zone and the fact that China is the first nuclear power to sign the protocol for the initiative.

"This (zone) is something nations of South-East Asia have pursued for a long time... of course it would be meaningless unless nuclear powers subscribed to it.

"It would seem that of the world's nuclear powers, only China is supportive," he said.

On the competing claims over the Spratly islands, Dr Mahathir reiterated that the issue should be settled through discussion among the countries involved, and maybe also bilaterally..

Besides China and Malaysia, the islands are also claimed by Taiwan, the Philippines, Vietnam and Brunei.

Turning to human rights, the Prime Minister said the Western media should look at the situation in their respective countries before criticising the Asians.

Human rights are being abused all over the world and the problem is not particular to Asia or South-East Asia.

"Only thing is Asians are less likely to criticise others... I do not think we should lay down the law for others to follow.

"The fact that we don't say anything does not mean that it is not happening in Europe. You have a tendency to look at others. Please try to look at yourself first," he said in response to a question from a Western journalist on the human rights records of China and Malaysia.

For example, the aborigine (Orang Asli) population in Malaysia has increased, whereas in other countries they have all but disappeared, he said.

On the impact of globalisation and borderless world with regards to the Multimedia Development Corridor (MSC), the Prime Minister said there will be none but stressed that some legislation and mechanism will be required to prevent abuse of technologies like the Internet.

"There is far too much undesirable things coming through the Internet and it is not doing anybody any good.

"Some countries like Germany and Singapore, have in fact taken action. I think people will come round to thinking that there must be some way of curbing, either through technology or legislation, the abuses," he said.

"The people who are with me in the IAP (MSC International Advisory Panel) do not at all feel threatened by my views about globalisation because they know I refer mainly to currency traders and stock market short-term investors," he added.

Dr Mahathir also said he discussed with Chinese President Jiang Zemin and Premier Zhu Rongji the possibility of future cooperation in

information technology, particularly Chinese participation in the MSC. "The Chinese Government and President are interested in the project and we feel there is scope for cooperation," he said.

On the proposed Asian media organisation, Dr Mahathir said it has long been a dream.

"A lot of people were talking about it but, apparently, we do not have the same kind of readership we would like. People are so used to the Western dominated media that they even sometimes reject their own news," he said.

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