

# Stand united, Asean told

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## Dr M: We must build up our industries based on a larger regional market

**KUALA LUMPUR, Wed:** Asean countries must learn to be competitive and survive by staying together, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

He said Asean can survive by defending its market and extracting the best terms from its dealings with developed countries.

"Alone we will fall, but together we stand a chance. Each of us will be offered attractive propositions, but we will lose out if we break ranks," he said in his speech at the 7th Conference and Exhibition of the Asean

Council on Petroleum here today.

Mahathir said Asean's market of half a billion people with low purchasing power can be built up by helping one another to develop.

Asean countries can leverage a trade-off with this market so that access will be on their terms and that will have substantial advantage, he added.

Mahathir said the Asean market and the development of the members' economic wealth must be done by themselves.

"Trade between Asean countries can be much

bigger than it is now.

"We must use our closeness to advantage by maximising the sourcing of our needs from within Asean where possible.

"We must build up our industries based on the larger Asean market rather than traditional markets."

Mahathir also said the Asean electrical and gas grid must be made a reality and that railway and road networks should be linked.

Movements among Asean nationals, he said, should be facilitated by using a common smart card for travelling or bor-

der crossing.

"There are clearly a host of things that the Asean countries can do in order to survive in the new economy."

He cited as example the power and gas grid linking Asean countries which will benefit all by providing

easy access to power.

On globalisation, Mahathir said that while the big and efficient businesses are needed, the smaller ones must be assured of survival as well.

"If we have to protect them, then we should," he added.