

Forum will focus on the emerging leaders

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THE next generation of leaders in Malaysia and Southeast Asia and how they deal with new leaders in China, South Korea and other countries in the region is expected to dominate discussion at the conference today.

Participants are also likely to touch on the directions in which these leaders are likely to take Malaysia and Southeast Asia.

The conference is organised by the Asia Society and co-hosted by the Asian Strategic and Leadership Institute.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad delivered a keynote address entitled "Malaysia and Asia: Seeking a Balance Between Peace and Prosperity" at the opening of the conference on Thursday.

Four sessions have been lined up for the three-day conference.

The first session on Thursday dealt with the war on terrorism and its impact on peace and stability in Asia.

Participants touched on how well the United States and Asia had worked together in the war on terrorism; how the Asians responded, the implications of the war on the hotspots in Asia; and whether countries could work together to combat transnational issues such as organised crime, drug trafficking, arms sales, illegal immigration and fundamentalism.

Session two revolved around

the economic downturn, and prospects for regional economic relations.

Today, participants will tackle the issue of how Malaysia and other Southeast Asian countries with large Muslim populations perceive and deal with the war on terrorism.

The conference is also expected to delve into Malaysia's role in the region and Asia, and what Asean+3 can do to help the region weather the worldwide economic downturn.

The last session deals with the role of the United States in the region. Areas of discussion are the major tenets of US policy towards Asia, concerns of nations in the region on these policies, how they are dealing with those concerns and how better to address them.

Among participants are Institute of Strategic and International Studies chairman and chief executive Tan Sri Noordin Sopiee, Asia Society president Nicholas Platt, Hills and Company chairman and chief executive and former US secretary for trade Carla A. Hills, US assistant secretary for East Asia and Pacific James Kelly, Itochu Corporation chairman Minoru Murofushi, ambassador-at-large at the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs Tommy Koh and Indonesia's Centre for Strategic and International Studies senior fellow Jusuf Wanandi.