

Friendly power

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One can be wealthy and strong without conquering others, says Dr M

BY LEONG SHEN-LI

PETALING JAYA: China has shown that a country can become wealthy and strong without conquering and colonising other countries, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

He said without conquering the world or even forcing people to accept Chinese systems, China had managed to become a very rich country.

"I think China knows that for it to be wealthy, it does not need to conquer countries," he said.

Answering questions during a dialogue session with participants after opening the 7th World Chinese Entrepreneurs Convention, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia's experience revealed that it was people who came from over 8,000 miles away in Europe that conquered countries.

"We are very near to China, but China never conquered us. We are not afraid of China becoming a big military power and gobbling us up because this is not the tradition of China," he said.

To a question about China's role in ensuring peace and stability in the region and the world, Dr Mahathir said China had an important role but it must first have peace and stability for some time.

He said there might be forces pushing for China to become more democratic, but if China was going to move towards more democracy, it should take its time with the process.

"It should do so slowly and not have a sudden overnight change because that would be destructive and destabilise China.

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"It may even cause civil wars, which will not be good for China, South-East Asia and the rest of the world," he said.

Dr Mahathir said China at the moment was certainly a threat to the economies of South-East Asian countries as it had cheap but highly skilled workforce and could therefore attract more foreign investment.

However, he said this was only a transition period and over time, the cost of production in China would rise and it would become less attractive to investors.

"But more than that, as the Chinese people get richer, they are going to need a lot of things. They are going to need products from other countries, and China will become a big market. And we should look at what we can sell to China," he said.

To a question on rules and regulations to protect the wealth and investment of foreign investors, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia never placed any controls on them.

"In some countries, when you have money in that country and you incur the displeasure of that country, they are likely to confiscate or control your money. This will not happen in Malaysia," he said.

He said Malaysia always welcomed more Chinese investment.

"If there are any obstructions, we will try to remove them. We want you to feel safe in this country and feel that your wealth is well protected," he said.

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