

Dr M: Welcome the rise of China

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■ By Chok Suat Ling and Anis Ibrahim

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said China's rapid rise as a superpower should not be feared but welcomed.

The former prime minister said China's economic development should be seen as an opportunity for Malaysia and the region.

Speaking at the third Asia Economic Summit today, Dr Mahathir said China becoming a great power should not be seen as a threat.

"We have to adjust to that. The shift of power from West to East will be good for us," he said in his luncheon address.

The two-day summit was jointly

organised by the Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute and the *New Straits Times*.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had always subscribed to a "prosperity neighbour" policy.

"Rich neighbours make good markets. When a neighbour becomes prosperous, it should be seen as an opportunity. There will be benefits for us. Even now we are benefiting from China's prosperity.

"For example, tourist arrivals from China have increased, although some disappear into the crowd here.

"There is also concern that the number of tourists from China will outnumber the entire Malaysian population."

He said in the earlier days, it was said that people in China rubbed oil on fish before frying it because they were so frugal.

"But now they deep fry and we sell them palm oil. They don't just use a teaspoon of oil but tablespoons of it so they can be a big market."

He said Malaysia could identify niche areas to supply products to China.

Dr Mahathir pointed out that another reason why the Chinese ought not to be feared was because they did not have a militaristic or colonial attitude.

"We have lived with them near us for a millennium and they did not conquer us. Others, the British,



FRIENDLY CHAT: Dr Mahathir (left) meeting delegates at the summit yesterday. — AP picture

Portuguese and Dutch, came from further away and conquered us."

He said history had shown that while the Chinese had the capacity for it, they did not invade Malaysia even when they had the opportunity to do so.

"Admiral Cheng Ho came here with a huge fleet but he did not conquer Malacca. He came to enhance relations. It is traditionally not their way."

Dr Mahathir remained optimistic for the future.