

PM: ASEAN ADMIRER BY SUPERPOWERS

Bloc members work with one another, says Dr M

PHNOM PENH

ASEAN remains a relevant and contemporary regional body to counterbalance the world's superpowers.

Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said among the global regional blocs, Asean continued to prosper and function, resulting in a positive outlook for its 10 members.

"Asean remains relevant. However, ties between its mem-



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bers need to be continuously strengthened to ensure that the bloc remains active and can face challenges posed by world superpowers."

Dr Mahathir, who is on a three-day official visit to Cambodia that began yesterday, was speaking at the "Balancing Relations with the Superpowers in the Context of Asean" dialogue session at the

Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP).

Present were Foreign Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah, International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Darell Leiking, Cambodia's Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Dr Chheam Reathy and RUPP rector Dr Chet Chealy.

Dr Mahathir said based on his observation, Asean had showcased brisk development since its inception in 1967 and had achieved milestones of great potential in developing the socio-economy of its members.

"Each of us will remain as a small nation if we are alone.

"Hence, we should move as an alliance or a regional body to allow our voices to be heard and

given attention."

More than 700 people took part in the dialogue, including Cambodian ministers, foreign delegations, academicians and non-governmental organisations.

Dr Mahathir said Asean was on the right path to create a developed and prosperous economic region and must continue to do so in light of the trade war between China and the United States.

"Compared with other regional organisations, Asean (members) are not only able to work with one another, but there are also no problems between members.

"This is Asean's advantage, which is admired by superpowers."

At the end of the dialogue, Dr

Mahathir invited Asean members to increase their investments in Malaysia.

"We cannot let such investments continue to be monopolised by certain countries.

"We need to safeguard our interests. China has the money and expertise.

"But we need to have our stand and measures to prevent our economy from being dominated by others."

Later, Dr Mahathir was conferred with the RUPP Honorary Fellowship Award as a recognition of his leadership in advancing progress and socio-economic development that contributed to the region's economy.

The award was also a recognition of Dr Mahathir's return to power as prime minister.