

'Vital to speak in one voice'

the star - 3/11/2019 pg. 2

This will make rest of the world listen to Asean, says Dr M

In Bangkok
**MERGAWATI
ZULFAKAR**



newsdesk@thestar.com.my

WHEN Asean with its population of 650 million speaks in one voice, the rest of the world, especially developed nations, will start to listen, says the Prime Minister.

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Asean countries did not want to go into a trade war but when other countries bullied the grouping, then they should try to speak in one voice.

"When they do things that are not nice to us, then we have to be 'un-nice'. For example, Malaysia's palm oil (industry) is accused of cutting down forest, killing habitats and (then) labelling products without Malaysian palm oil to sabotage us.

"What do we do? Well, if you cut down the import of palm oil from Malaysia, we will cut down on some of your imports ... equal amount.

"If we can do this together, believe me, they will listen. If they stop buying palm oil, we can, well, stop buying planes and all that. We buy some Russian planes or something. Immediately, they will start blaming other countries," said Dr Mahathir here yesterday.

To a question during a dialogue session at the Asean Business and Investment Summit on how long the trade war between the United States and China would last as it was affecting the global economy, he said it could last as long as five years if President Donald Trump is not re-elected.

"At the very worst, it will go on for five years if he wins. Leaders



Making a point: Dr Mahathir speaking at a dialogue session at the Asean Business and Investment Summit in Bangkok as moderator Arin looks on. — Bernama

make decisions that affect their country - either good or bad. Change leader, perhaps (there will be) better direction.

"When you limit the term to two, then the damage done is much less. Otherwise, the people should turn against leaders who are doing bad things for their country.

"I believe the American people are not happy. Some may be but many are not happy with the present policies of their government.

"Many are against this trade war and I believe the next five years will bring results but (it) may be sooner if leadership is changed because this is the decision of one person," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said that Asean must take advantage of its big population and keep up with the changes, especially in the fourth indus-

trial revolution era.

He cited China which decided to modernise itself in 40 years and outstrip all countries to be an economic superpower.

"How did they manage to speed up economic growth? They use their big domestic population.

"The people are poor but they need something for their food supply (and) transportation and because there is demand domestically, the market can grow," he said.

Opportunities from the fourth industrial revolution, said Dr Mahathir, must be seized quickly within Asean with the digital economy and new way of doing business

"We talk so much on digitalisation and new ways of doing business and yet, we are not attending to the new methods of doing business.

"First thing is to educate our people, they must understand and learn new technology.

"China is well ahead of us because they are better integrated than us. We don't work as well as we should and we need to overcome this separation as this can lead to our economies growing much faster," he pointed out.

Asean, he said, could be a good testing ground for its own products and once the early mistakes and faults of these products could be eliminated, better quality products could be made and exported to the rest of the world.

Watch the video
thestartv.com

