



**TOP SPEAKERS:** Dr Mahathir (left), Hawke (centre) and Powell at The Global Leaders Dialogue. — Bernama picture

# Powell: Do not isolate US from involvement in Asia

**KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs.** — Former United States Secretary of State Colin Powell today cautioned nations not to isolate the US from involvement in Asia.

He said the US gets uneasy when organisations are formed that push back and isolate US.

Powell was explaining the US opposition to the formation of the East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC) proposed by Malaysia 14 years ago under then Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Dr Mahathir, who was guest of honour at the Global Leaders Dialogue in Sri Kembangan here tonight, had asked Powell to explain the US stance against the EAEC.

"I would caution anyone to be very careful about trying to push US from Asia," Powell replied.

He said the US military

presence had helped create balance and stability in the region over the years.

He insisted that the US had not imposed itself on Asian affairs but had actually been invited by the countries in the region themselves.

He said ally nations in Asia had voiced concerns whenever the US intended to reduce or pull out its military from the region.

Powell, however, agreed with Dr Mahathir that the threat from international terrorism could be resolved by defusing the situation in the Middle East, in particular the Palestine-Israel conflict.

"I agree with Tun Mahathir that the challenge will be to go to the root cause of the tension," he said.

"I hope with a new leadership in Palestine this can be achieved. We should not lose the opportunity and the US people and the president should pressure both sides to

put aside their differences and settle the matter amicably."

In his speech at the dialogue, Powell said the world was a safer place now than it was a few years ago.

He said the US was not looking for another place to invade and always prioritised multilateralism in military actions.

Powell said the world should have no fear of the US starting World War Three.

Also present was former Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke.

Dr Mahathir, in his address, said the Perdana Leadership Foundation would organise a conference on peace by the end of this year in Kuala Lumpur.

"We feel the conference is appropriate because there are too many people living in war and to remind the world that you need not kill to settle issues," he said.

NST-17/6/2005