

Adopting culture of peace

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KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia does not see China as an economic or military threat in the Asia-Pacific region.

Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin reiterated Malaysia's stand that although there were legitimate concerns on China's re-surgence, much of it was based on unfounded assumptions.

"In my view, China is unlikely to be as powerful or as threatening as it is sometimes depicted to be. Economic power is not going to be concentrated in China as much as it was in the United States which accounted for half of the global wealth after World War 2."

Muhyiddin said many countries were enhancing their military capacity, strengthening their alliances and defence cooperation with their allies in



Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin says only genuine mutual restraint can bring about prospects for peace

view of China's potential to challenge their position in the region, its rising military expenditure, its alleged lack of

transparency and its increasing strategic presence and reach.

"The concerned countries must clarify the issues and alleviate them. This is particularly important since competitive military acquisitions and defence strategies can lead to dangerous excesses and spark a spiral of mutually provocative measures that aggravate the situation," he said in his speech at the opening of the "23rd Asia-Pacific Roundtable" at a hotel here yesterday.

Muhyiddin called on Asia-Pacific countries to address conflicting claims over territory and resources via peaceful negotiation and adjudication, rather than through offensive war and hostile coalitions.

"A culture of peace that abhors and rejects wanton war must be cultivated instead of

increasing apprehensions and rivalry," he said, referring to the 12 million refugees and 26 million people displaced last year as a consequence of conflicts worldwide.

Muhyiddin commended the US for engaging a more multilateral and conciliatory gesture which some countries like North Korea failed to reciprocate.

He denounced North Korea's nuclear tests last week which destabilised the Korean peninsula and East Asia as a whole.

"All parties must desist from belligerent and provocative actions and become less hardline and be more accommodative. Only genuine mutual restraint can bring about prospects for peace," Muhyiddin said, referring to the initiatives of China with Japan and Taiwan.

He cited the cooperation

among Asean countries which had led to the success in combating the scourge of insurgency, militancy and terrorism in the region.

The roundtable, which ends tomorrow, has plenary sessions touching on the global financial crisis, radicalism, terrorism, insurgency, militancy, the dangers of climate change, Japan-US-China relations, regional military build-up, political changes and future challenges.

It is jointly organised by the Institute of International and Strategic Studies (Iis) Malaysia and the Asean-Isis.

Among those at the opening yesterday were Isis chairman and chief executive officer Tan Sri Mohamed Jawhar Hassan and Asean-Isis chairman Simon Tay, who is also Singapore Institute of International Affairs chairman.