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Insolence shown by his aides too that night

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I HAVE many American friends, living in Malaysia and abroad, and I know they would not condone what Vice-President Al Gore did as a guest of Malaysia and Malaysians, at the Apec Business Summit recently.

Involved as I was in organising the event, I was also aghast at the insolence shown by his aides that night. I would just mention two incidents to illustrate.

When the US Vice-President arrived at the holding room on the fourth floor of Putra World Trade Centre, the venue of the summit, one aide told the PWTC staff to turn off the air-conditioner.

His reason: Somebody could have sent in poison through the air-conditioning duct! To comply, the PWTC engineer would have had to turn off the central air-conditioning system, with disastrous results. Of course the engineer refused.

As I was briefing the Master of Ceremonies for the gala dinner, another aide of the Vice-President came to me and said we should first announce the arrival of the Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and, only after his arrival, announce the arrival of Gore.

And he proceeded to tell me the exact wording of the announcement. I told him very politely that I did not take instructions from him.

As far as I was concerned, the Malaysian Prime Minister should arrive after Gore. But, despite the fact that the Master of Ceremonies announced the arrival of Gore, he did not walk into the hall. He only walked in after the Prime Minister had done so.

Having insulted the PWTC staff, and then the Malaysian Prime Minister, Gore proceeded to insult Malaysians and guests of Malaysia with his now infamous remarks.