

Change approaches in dealing within Asean, Malaysia urged

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KUALA LUMPUR. Fri. — Malaysia should look at new approaches in the way it conducts its diplomatic ties with fellow Asean countries, United Nations special envoy for Myanmar Tan Sri Razali Ismail said today.

He said the country has to accept that the Asean way was not designed to address international terrorism, which is currently the biggest threat to the region.

“This is not to say that Asean’s focus on economic development and non-intervention in each other’s affairs should be dropped.

“However, the fact of the matter is that no one nation can deal with the threat of international terrorism on its own.

“Unlike the national conflicts that have defined our thinking in the past, terrorism threatens the objective of economic development that all Southeast Asians, be they from Brunei or Vietnam, hold so dear,” he said.

Razali was speaking in a lecture entitled *Re-examining Security: State and Global Challenge* organised by the Universiti Malaya’s

Department for Strategic and International Studies.

He said within the Asean framework, a number of practical things could be done immediately.

“For example, we must improve our intelligence gathering capabilities, and our intelligence analysis skills.

Razali said although the policy of constructive engagement remained a sensitive issue within the Asean context, there had been “an intellectual shift” within the organisation on the matter.

“Although we may not shout about it from the rooftops, a degree of constructive engagement is already taking place.

“Perhaps the best example of this is Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad’s efforts to bring democratisation and national reconciliation to Myanmar through his contacts with his counterpart Senior General Than Shwe.

“Although obviously discussing the internal affairs of another Asean member state, his overtures have succeeded.”