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United against hegemony

THE message coming out of the Asia-Europe Meeting is clear enough: there are officially great differences and disparities in policy between the United States and the rest of the world in matters concerning global security and international engagement. And the fact that the Copenhagen summit involves 15 of the best and most influential countries in Europe and Asia should more than raise eyebrows in the White House.

The leaders, in their Declaration on Co-operation against International Terrorism, unequivocally underlined the need to take into account the root causes of terrorism and for a more comprehensive approach by the international community to deal with the issue. It is precisely over this point that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has been talking himself hoarse on many platforms, in numerous fora. Malaysia indeed has been unwavering in its stand that the terrorism manifested in many parts of the world today is a symptom of a deeper ailment or syndrome that needs to be treated with political solutions.

While it may be too simplistic to suggest poverty, the cycle of historic violence and specific American foreign policies as being the root causes, it is equally unwise to rule out political resolutions as a sure way to ease tensions in West Asia, a proposition shared by French President Jacques Chirac and Dr Mahathir in their bilateral meeting on Monday.

While it is most comforting to note that the Asem declaration also addressed another concern Malaysia and many other countries have been voicing - the rejection of any attempt to associate terrorism with any religion, race or nationality - the Copenhagen summit brought to the fore a rare show of protest, no matter how subtly, against US policies by some of the rich and powerful nations.

Voices raised at the summit against the American approach on Iraq and North Korea, for instance, proved significant. At least it shows that there is indeed no room for American hegemony.