

30/03/2002

Diplomacy, not war

MALAYSIA has consistently disagreed with any attempt to launch another attack on Iraq. The Gulf War and the ensuing UN embargo against the country caused massive privation thus leaving Malaysia little option but to take a position against the causing of more unnecessary hardship on the Iraqis.

As the Prime Minister has asserted, opening up another theatre in the "war on terrorism" while Afghanistan remains unresolved would only bring on a terror backlash. And, as he never tires of saying, before any war against global terrorism can be won a solution to the Palestinian problem must be found. For the violence epitomised by Sept 11 has its roots there.

As an Islamic nation, Malaysia views itself an important part of the Muslim world. It cannot, and will not, therefore ignore the injustices surrounding Palestine: the displacement of its people and their suffering after years of living in refugee camps in their own homeland. To many Malaysians the intifada that forced the Israelis to talk peace with the Palestinians is a natural consequence of this squalor and oppression. When young men are determined to face the fury of gun barrels armed only with catapults and stones, something is hugely amiss.

Furthermore, military strikes on Iraq will only aggravate its already desperate situation and further inflame the hurt of the Muslim world. There is truth in Dr Mahathir's remark that "Iraq will have to come around...to satisfy the international community". Therefore, he rightly concludes, more effort on the part of the UN agencies to persuade Iraq to let in their weapons inspectors is needed, not war.

(END)