

12/03/2002

Malaysia and NZ call for international effort to tackle terrorism

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MALAYSIA and New Zealand have called for international co-operation in solving the problem of terrorism. This includes "intelligence sharing and law enforcement agencies co-operating with each other".

New Zealand Foreign and Trade Minister Phil Goff said the two countries also agreed that while suppressing terrorism was a necessary task, "we also have to ensure that we address the causes of terrorism".

In an interview in Kuala Lumpur, Goff said: "There was strong agreement between New Zealand and Malaysia that until we tackle problems such as the situation in the Middle East between the Palestinian Authority and Israel, there will continue to be an environment that will breed terrorism and sympathy for terrorism."

He said it was important that the co-operation was based on broad coalition of nations to tackle the problem so as to avoid a repeat of the Sept 11 tragedy.

Goff, who was on a three-day visit to Malaysia, earlier held discussions with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

He also met Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar and Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak to discuss bilateral ties as well as regional issues.

Goff described his meeting with the Prime Minister as "very comprehensive", adding that "I think we had similar views on the question of the Palestinian Authority and Israel ... We believe quite strongly that violence only begets violence ... Like Dr Mahathir said if an Israeli is killed in an act of terrorism, if you respond by killing four Palestinians, where does it lead you?"

Both agreed that Israel should abide by the United Nations' Resolution 242 adopted in 1967 that it withdraw from the occupied territories.

Goff said if Tel Aviv was prepared to make those compromises then the world could provide support and an environment that would protect its legitimate boundaries.

"I've expressed to both (Palestinian) chairman (Yasser) Arafat and (Israeli) Foreign Minister (Shimon) Peres that New Zealand would be prepared to contribute to an international peacekeeping force, but before we can do that there has to be peace.

"We cannot go in where one side refuses to accept the existence of the peacekeeping force which makes it unviable," he said, adding New Zealand currently had peacekeepers in the Middle East in Gorah, on the border of Gaza and Egypt.

Like Malaysia, New Zealand stresses the importance of finding a solution to the Middle East conflict.

"If not, the problem will continue to surface, causing young people to sacrifice their lives in terrorist acts which breed sympathy for further violence. Thus, violence from both sides has to stop.

"For any peace to be created on a fair and just outcome, (it) will require compromises but (Israeli) Prime Minister (Ariel) Sharon, at this point, is not prepared to make (peace)," he said.

Goff and Dr Mahathir also discussed bilateral issues and expressed the need to work closely to further enhance relations.

During the meeting, Goff also asked Dr Mahathir about his visit to Antarctica and they discussed possible co-operation on scientific projects

as New Zealand has a research facility at Scott base.

He said there was a desire for both countries to work closely on scientific projects on Antarctica as New Zealand and Malaysia had built a strong commitment to protect the area.

Total trade between the two countries totalled NZ\$1.6 billion (RM2.56 billion) last year and is in Malaysia's favour.

New Zealand's exports to Malaysia rose by 16 per cent and comprised mainly meat, wool and dairy products.

Malaysia's exports to New Zealand of mainly electronic components increased by 21 per cent last year.

New Zealand is also interested in attracting more Malaysian students to its institutions of higher learning. There are about 1,300 Malaysian students there.

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