

01/10/2002

Malaysia, Ireland agree that dialogue, not war, is the best way to resolve

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Malaysia and Ireland share the view that war is not the best way to resolve conflicts or disputes.

Both countries feel the best way forward to settle any conflict, whether local or international, is through multilateral discussions, dialogues, peaceful negotiations and diplomacy.

This was agreed upon when Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad met visiting Irish president Mary McAleese at the Renaissance Hotel today.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, who said this to reporters after the meeting, added that the two leaders discussed ways to establish closer bilateral relations and cooperation to promote trade.

They also touched on closer economic, education and tourism ties between both countries, with more visits at all levels planned in the future, Syed Hamid added.

Later, at a public lecture entitled "Meeting the Challenges of 21st Century: Ireland's Perspective" organised by the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations, McAleese said in the wake of the Sept 11 attack on the United States last year, the challenge of international understanding was now greater than ever.

"We ought to stop thinking of countries in terms of their religious identities and judge their performance by a universal yardstick," she said.

McAleese said Malaysia had been an articulate exponent of Islamic values in the modern world and, with its coming chairmanship of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference and of the Non-Aligned Movement, "offered a positive scope at a sensitive time in international affairs".

She said there were three main challenges faced by the world. They were, the challenge to world peace, the challenge of understanding among the various races, religions and ethnicity and the challenge to justice and equality.

The United Nations, especially the Security Council, must spearhead efforts to overcome all three challenges, said McAleese.

"The UN, of course, is not a free floating superhuman institution but the sum of its parts. Each country has an obligation to help enhance the UN's capacities.

"Smaller nations like ours must have an abiding interest in avoiding recourse to force in international relations. We need to specialise in conflict prevention and crisis management so as to uphold all that is best for the human condition..."

She said that in the face of growing worries about unilateralism and an all-prevalent scepticism about the prospects of international understanding, nations like Malaysia and Ireland had a greater need than ever before to address key global issues with intelligence and determination.

Earlier, McAleese was greeted by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin and Dr Mahathir on arrival at Parliament Square for a ceremonial welcome.

The national anthems of both countries were played before McAleese inspected a guard-of-honour mounted by 108 officers and men from the First Battalion Royal Malay Regiment led by Mejar Abu Samah Mad Noh. A 21 gun salute was then fired.

Cabinet ministers and heads of foreign mission here were later introduced to McAleese.

McAleese, who arrived last night, is in Malaysia on a four-day state visit.