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The Apec summit's lost opportunity

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THE Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) Meeting in Los Cabos, Mexico, turned out to be another summit that followed the US Agenda and lost a golden opportunity to effectively combat terrorism and global economic uncertainty!

Instead, it adopted a host of security measures to counter terrorism without grappling with some of its underlying causes!

Globalised terrorism will therefore continue to undermine the world economy, which in turn will aggravate world poverty and oppression - and could thus encourage more terrorism.

For instance, the world economy and the economic prospects in South-East Asia will suffer as a result of the tragic bomb blast on the tourist island paradise of Bali, Indonesia, on October 12 2002.

In the absence of research studies that must be made, if terrorism is to be countered at its very core, I would venture to suggest some reasons for this rise in the "Globalisation of terrorism!"

Deep frustration that universal grievances and injustices are not being addressed;

Oppression and suppression as in the case of the Palestinians, are surely another cause for terrorism.

The Palestinians have struggled long and hard to be independent and free from the illegal Israeli Occupation of Palestinian territory.

Consequently, the Palestinians are filled with extreme anger and hatred against Israel and the US that strongly supports the Israelis with arms and aid;

Extreme poverty and economic injustices could be a further cause for terrorism as there is nothing to lose, as often there is little choice between death and acute deprivation.

Consider the pathetic plight of Iraqi children who are dying of malnutrition and starvation and lack of basic medicine because of the inhumane sanctions, all because the US and its allies detest Iraqi President Saddam Hussein!

The Third World has been exploited through colonisation for centuries and in most cases, left seriously depleted in good governance and in resources.

The rich and powerful countries provide extensive subsidies to their farmers at the expense of importing cheaper agricultural products from the Third World countries.

Thus, cattle in the European Union are subsidised to the extent of US\$2 (US\$1 = RM3.80) a day, while more than half the world's population, of about 6 billion poor people, earn a paltry US\$1 per day, because they are not allowed or unable to compete with the highly subsidised Western farmers!

The following are some solutions to combat globalised terrorism and economic decline:

The US and its allies should force Israel to withdraw from the illegally Occupied Palestinian Territories.

The US, as the sole superpower, should be even-handed in dealing with the West Asian Crisis, instead of bowing to the immense pressure from its own Jewish citizens and Israel itself.

Poverty alleviation should be given a much greater priority by the rich countries, which instead are giving lip service to two-thirds of the

world's population of 6 billions who are suffering from the lack of the basic human amenities that have been proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights!

The International Financial System should return to the basic principles of the Bretton Woods Agreement which will bring back economic stability and prosperity to all countries, instead of some manipulative rich and powerful countries.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's proposal that rich countries provide just 1 per cent of their gross national product to the proposed International Infrastructure Fund or equivalent, would help stimulate world infrastructure and economic growth.

Thus, world economic growth would be based on genuine production and productivity, and not on mere money speculation.

The US could become a world force for the good of other countries and not domination and imperialism.

The new Bush Doctrine of "Preventive War and Pre-emptive Action", that could plunge the whole world into the Third World War or greater global terrorism and economic slowdown, should be rejected by the United Nations.

Instead, the US could seize the golden opportunity to lead the world into a New Economic Order which is dedicated to peace and freedom from want so as to give real meaning to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights!

Then it will be possible to effectively fight global terrorism and enhance the prospects for equitable and sustained global economic growth.

This lead should have been taken by the US at the Apec Meeting in Mexico.

However, the US should strive again for world peace and prosperity and not another war - before it is too late!

In the meantime, Happy Deepavali and may its spirit bring enlightenment to a darkening world economy.