

Abdullah: Oppose

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PEACE IS POSSIBLE

WAR must be consistently opposed, for even if public opinion fails to deter countries from going to war it is able to hold governments accountable for their actions, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said yesterday.

Speaking at the closing ceremony of the inaugural Kuala Lumpur World Peace Conference, he said "people power" should be recognised as a deterrent against conflict.

Even though widespread public sentiment against the American and British invasion of Iraq did not stop the war from happening, it had turned the spotlight on the motives of those countries in wanting to attack Iraq.

"Global public opinion against the war must be sustained. The people's power may not have prevented the war against Iraq, but it is today holding accountable some of the Governments that decided to support the war," Abdullah said.

Malaysia's opposition to the war, he said, was based on the principle that the sanctity of international law must be upheld, and in doing so the country had risked the ire of the more powerful nations that went to war in Iraq.

He noted Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's courage in opposing the Iraq war.

"Dr Mahathir spoke out in a manner which many world leaders wanted to, but could not.

"Even though neither Malaysia



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nor the millions of people who... (were) against the war succeeded in preventing it, history ought to record the courage demonstrated by Dr Mahathir and the people of Malaysia in standing up for principles and justice."

In working for peace, Abdullah called for an understanding on how people viewed each other, so that they would not always perceive each other as a threat or an enemy.

He said tolerance and moderation had to be promoted between individuals and collectively, if the world were to have a lasting peace. "If we fail to live by these values at home with our families, then our own

war consistently

personal threshold against conflict is considerably lowered.”

He said people needed to counter existing radicalism, inculcate values that promote peace among youths, and identify and defend a common ground against extremists who used religion to create conflict.

Abdullah also described his personal peace challenge as a duty to ensure that extremism and radical-

ism did not take root in Malaysia.

Malaysia under Dr Mahathir’s leadership had earned the respect of other countries, he said.

“That we have managed to successfully live as one people at home, given our differences in faiths and ethnicity, enables us to understand international conflict from a much broader and textured perspective.”

As such, Malaysia was in a lead-

ing position to promote peace among nations and civilisations, Abdullah said, especially with its current chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement and the coming Organisation of the Islamic Conference meeting.

Earlier, the conference adopted a declaration on promoting peace.

The declaration included calls to support all non-violence programmes that advanced peace and nurtured individuals to serve their communities and the world, instead of solely focusing on academic and technical education, increasing access to education for children in poor countries and respect for international law and national sovereignty, and identifying a common ground that would advance world peace.

Abdullah also presented the Malaysia World Peace Foundation Lifetime Achievement Award to former Czech Republic President Vaclav Havel, for his commitment to peace and democracy in his country.

Havel, a writer and dissident, was elected President in the country’s first free election in over four decades, following the collapse of communist rule through the peaceful “Velvet Revolution” of 1989.

The award was received on his behalf by Czech Republic Ambassador to Malaysia Dr Vitezslav Grepl.

Havel, in his acceptance speech read by Grepl, said that each person needed to cultivate a “moral minimum” — a sense of responsibility towards his fellow humans and the earth on which man depended.