

24/02/2003

A duty to oppose war, and summit is good platform

Lee Lam Thye

PEACE and security issues are taking priority at the 13th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in Kuala Lumpur.

As mentioned by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, NAM must help resolve the problems of war and terrorism before focusing its attention on helping its members.

In view of the world's preoccupation with terrorism and war, NAM has to address these issues before giving attention to the economic and political problems of its 114 members.

Undoubtedly, NAM is a conducive platform where member states can collectively address economic, social and development challenges of the new millennium.

NAM should take a strong stand on the causes of terrorism and the need to remove them.

Malaysia's stand on the war against terrorism has been consistent. While agreeing that proven terrorists must be brought to justice, it is equally important to identify the causes of terrorism and work to remove them.

Denying terrorists any ground for committing acts of terror would mean addressing its root causes.

War alone cannot overcome terrorism. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth is no solution. It will only result in the loss of lives.

Malaysia has sent a clear message that it is against war.

War involves the mass destruction of lives and infrastructure and leaves societies in chaos. People suffer untold miseries.

The answer lies in winning hearts and minds, whether in Palestine or anywhere else.

Malaysia's strong advocacy of peace is reflected in the setting up of the People's Alliance for Peace Malaysia, a coalition of more than 1,000 NGOs, youth and voluntary bodies, political parties, religious, student and professional as well as musical and cultural organisations that share a goal of promoting world peace.

Peace Malaysia has collected more than a million signatures from Malaysians of all races and religions as well as from all strata of society.

The signatures were handed over to Dr Mahathir at a mammoth peace rally at the Bukit Jalil Stadium in Kuala Lumpur last night.

As the worldwide protests against war in Iraq gather momentum, the NAM Summit provides an ideal opportunity for the grouping, which represents the majority of the 191 United Nations member states, to send a strong message to the United States and its allies that it is opposed to war as a solution to conflict. Similarly, NAM should also take a stand on the Palestinian conflict from the stand-point of denial of human rights.

A united stand taken by NAM can be a mighty deterrent against war. Whether or not the US takes heed is a different issue. What is crucial is our duty and conscience to oppose war as a solution to conflict.