

31/03/2003

Caring Malaysians can help out the victims

Lee Lam Thye

THE Dewan Rakyat unanimously passed a motion on March 24 condemning the unilateral military action by the United States and its allies against Iraq.

The unanimous support given to the motion introduced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad by both Government and Opposition Members of Parliament left no doubt that the people's elected representatives are totally united in their opposition to the war against Iraq.

It is rare to see MPs from both sides being unanimous on a motion introduced by the Government.

But it was the second time within a month that both Government and Opposition MPs gave a unanimous "aye" on the Iraq issue.

Even before the issue was brought to the Dewan Rakyat, all Malaysians loudly and clearly opposed the war.

All over the country they have campaigned for peace. More than two million Malaysians have put their signatures for peace. At the mammoth peace rally at Bukit Jalil Stadium, more than 100,000 gathered to protest against the brutality of war.

Across the globe, there is mounting opposition to war, including in the US and Britain.

When I was in Hong Kong last week, Hong Kong lawmakers also put aside their political differences to demand that US and Britain halt the war against Iraq.

They also urged the Chinese Government to call an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council and to rally international support to stop the war.

The South China Morning Post carried an editorial headlined "A war that will not make the world safer".

Malaysians will undoubtedly share the view of Dr Mahathir that the UN must exercise its authority in demanding that US and its allies stop the war.

The UN is under severe test. And Secretary-General Kofi Annan is helpless so far.

He should have acted decisively and swiftly to defend the UN Charter instead of allowing it to be reduced to nothing when the US acted unilaterally to wage war on Iraq.

Yes, the US-led coalition will win the war, but at what cost? What is most critical is the suffering inflicted upon innocent civilians, who need humanitarian assistance. The UN must not fail them in this hour of need. In this context, the decision by our Government to launch the Iraqi People's Humanitarian Fund with an approved contribution of RM10 million is most appropriate.

All peaceloving Malaysians should do their bit. The corporate sector can also donate food, clothing and medical supplies.

Although our protests and opposition could not prevent the US-led invasion, the least that we can do as caring Malaysians is to help those affected by the ravages of war and minimise their hardship.