

24/02/2003

Malaysians send peace message

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Sending a message of peace to the world, more than 100,000 Malaysians gathered at a peace rally tonight as a united force against aggression and the brutality of war.

Led by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, people from all walks of life thronged the National Stadium in Bukit Jalil in support of the Malaysian Peace Rally.

The event, themed "Peace Without Prejudice", was organised by the People's Alliance for Peace Malaysia (Peace Malaysia).

With banners, and chanting anti-war slogans, they told the world, especially the superpowers, to say no to war and give peace a chance. RTM telecast the rally live.

The event started with prayers of various religions. The highlight of the night was the handing over of 2.5 million signatures collected from Malaysians during the One Million Signature Campaign and a sevenpoint memorandum of peace to Dr Mahathir, who praised Malaysians for their determination to see lasting peace in the world and oppose war in Iraq.

He said the West was proud of its civilisation but sadly, they resorted to war and killing to resolve conflicts.

"To them, the solution to problems is to kill. That is what their war is all about."

It was unfortunate, Dr Mahathir said, that the greatness of a nation now was determined by its ability to kill.

"Actually, those who like to kill are uncivilised," he said, adding that there was nothing to be proud of if one's civilisation was built from the blood of the innocent.

He said civilised people should not resort to war. Instead, they should find other means to resolve conflicts and differences.

Dr Mahathir said today's war was against the innocent - old men, women and children.

"At least in the Stone Age, a quarrel is between warriors or those of equal strength, but now, it is between the powerful and the helpless."

The Prime Minister said the West liked to preach that governments should be elected through democratic process.

"But today we see attempts to change a government through war. Whether Iraq is right or wrong is not the issue but the changing of a government by force."

Dr Mahathir said when Iraq was defeated, the United States would divert its attention to changing the Governments of Iran and North Korea, the two other countries it has labelled as part of the "axis of evil".

The rally started at 5pm with performances by artistes such as Elite, KRU and Ezlyn, poetry reading, rousing speeches and the screening of video footages in which Malaysians expressed their hope and desire to see peace in the world.

There was also a performance by 16 Palestinians specially flown in by Peace Malaysia.

They gave an eye-opening show that made everyone present become more aware of the plight of the Palestinians.

Peace Malaysia is a coalition of non-governmental organisations with the common goal of pursuing a permanent and just world peace.

The Malaysians for Peace signature campaign was jointly conducted by the 4B Youth Association and the Malaysian Association of Youth Clubs (MAYC).

