

23/07/2003

World wants US to inspire, not intimidate

PETALING JAYA, Tues. - Malaysia and the rest of the world are looking to the United States to use its power not to intimidate but to inspire mankind following the Sept 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said today Malaysia had proved in no uncertain terms its commitment to combat the menace, especially with the recent setting up of the Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism in Kuala Lumpur.

"We have always argued that the best way of fighting terrorism is to examine and understand its root causes.

"Alas, the end of the Cold War and the emergence of the unipolar world has not brought about the peace that we all dreamed of."

He added that in the post-Sept 11 world, new emphasis had been placed on the need for international inter-cultural understanding, particularly between the West and Islamic countries.

"As a contributor to this dialogue, Malaysia is in a unique position to offer itself as an example of an Islamic country that has succeeded in maintaining peace, prosperity and tolerance amid vast cultural and religious diversity," he said in his speech at the 6th Tun Razak Lecture - Learner Centred Education in the Knowledge Age - presented by Ohio University provost Dr Stephen Kopp at a hotel here.

Also present was United States Ambassador to Malaysia Marie T. Huhtala.

Najib said while the political views of Malaysia and the United States might not always concur, their partnership in the areas of trade, culture and education remained strong.

"Educational partnerships such as the Tun Abdul Razak Distinguished Chair at Ohio University are mutually beneficial to Malaysians and Americans and can provide an important forum through which citizens of both countries can interact and learn from one another.

"In the current political context, the establishment of the Tun Razak Chair and the Malaysian Resource Centre at Ohio University becomes increasingly significant," said Najib.

The Tun Abdul Razak Distinguished Chair in Southeast Asian Studies was established in March 1980 at Ohio University to permanently honour the memory of Najib's father, Tun Abdul Razak Hussein. Equally significant, it also serves as the mainstay of the close relationship between the US and Malaysia.

Former Foreign Minister Tan Sri Mohamad Ghazali Shafie had been Malaysia's only contributor to the lecture series that had included eminent personalities like former Deputy US Secretary of State Dr Clifton Wharton and President Emeritus of Ohio University, Dr Charles Ping.

On US' policy in admitting Malaysian students to their varsities, Najib said that following the Sept 11 incident, all students vying to study there had to undergo the stipulated vetting.

On the transition of power when Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi takes over from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in October, Najib said that all parties should respect the new leadership.