

Lend African nations a hand, Annan urges Malaysia

NST- 13/7/2007

KUALA LUMPUR: Former United Nations secretary-general Kofi Annan last night said Malaysia, with its economic success and ability to maintain racial and religious harmony, is well positioned to help develop African nations.

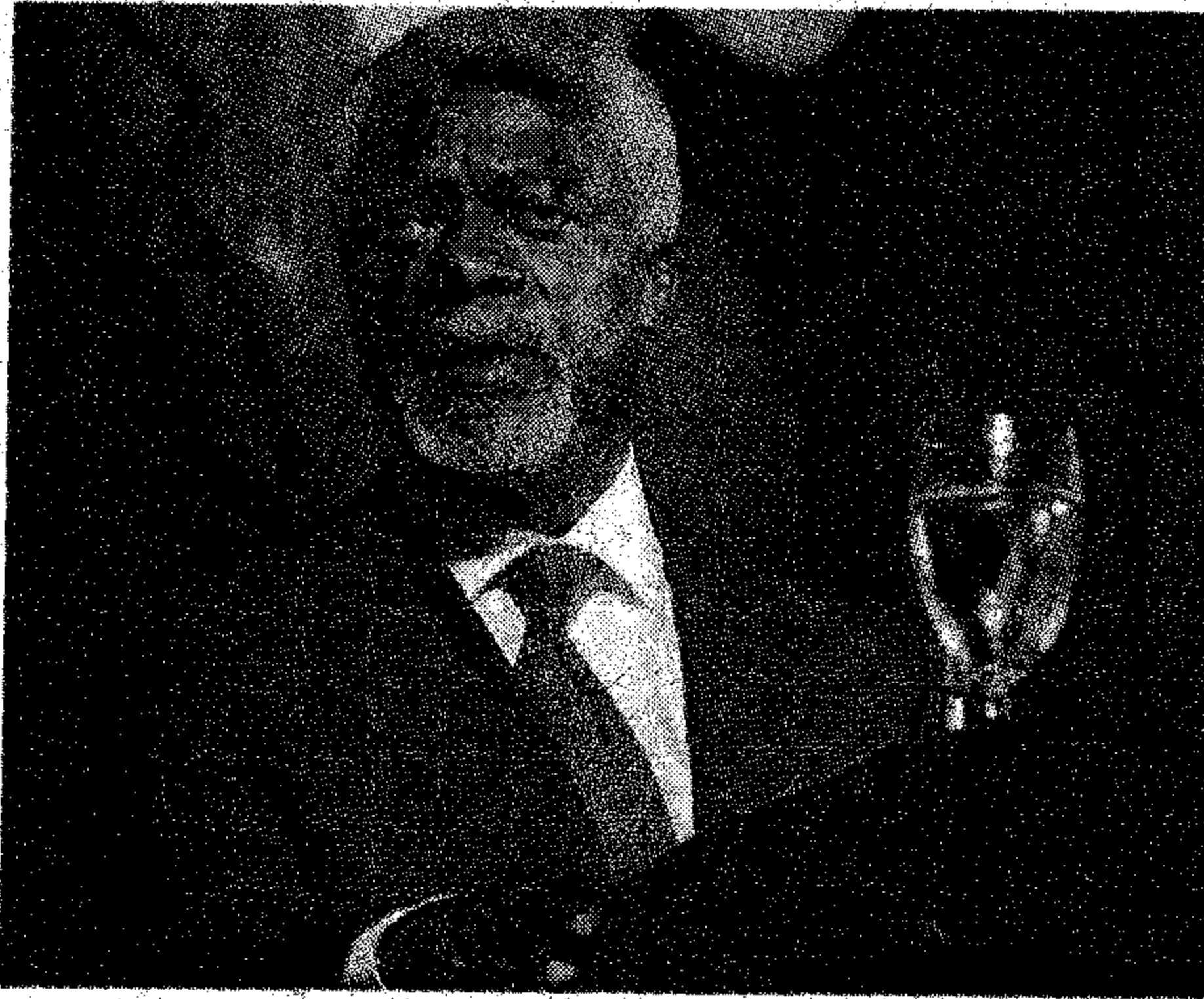
The Nobel laureate said this could be achieved through stronger South-South co-operation.

Malaysia's unique experience of development offered a more accessible and appropriate model for less developed African countries to learn from.

"By this, I mean it is important for Malaysia, as well as China and India, to transfer its capabilities and experience, and support African countries in their efforts towards development.

"How, for example, to invest in education, develop cost-effective social safety nets, build appropriate housing and health systems, promote agricultural productivity, rural development and harness savings," he said when delivering his address entitled "Sharing Dividends of Development with the World: Thoughts on Malaysian Merdeka" at the Khazanah Global Lectures series.

The event was launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. Some 800 people attended, including Abdullah's wife Datin Seri



Former United Nations secretary-general Kofi Annan says Malaysia's system of religious pluralism can play a big role in fostering harmony

Jeanne Abdullah, Second Finance Minister Tan Sri Nor Mohamed Yakcop, Malaysia's former permanent representative to the UN, Tan Sri Razali Ismail, and Khazanah Nasional managing director Datuk Azman Mokhtar.

Annan, who led the UN from 1997 till last year, said Malaysia had much to be proud of as most of its citizens were financially secure and there was a relatively high degree of social mobility.

Comparing his own country, Ghana,

to Malaysia, Annan said both countries initially had a lot in common, like rich natural resources, similar education systems and significant gold reserves.

However, by the turn of this century, the two countries were not alike.

Annan said the factor which separated Malaysia from Ghana was that the former was better governed. Malaysia's system of religious pluralism could play an important role in fostering religious harmony.