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# PM: Better multilateral cooperation needed

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THE world, post-9/11, faces an uncharted security landscape with multiple threat scenarios which need to be met comprehensively by securing borders of each country and the tying up of economies for mutual benefit.

In making this assertion, prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said every nation must play their part in securing their own borders, followed by a willingness to work together multilaterally.

"Because war between nations is no longer the greatest threat scenario, we are facing a new set of asymmetric and non-traditional security challenges. Human trafficking, terrorism, drug smuggling and nuclear proliferation cannot be resolved in isolation or through the old security structures of the past," he said when delivering a keynote address at the 10th International Institute of Strategic Studies Asia Security Summit.

Members of Asean countries were aware of new security challenges and had placed a range of security structures, including linking their economies.

"Intra-Asian trade is valued at around US\$1 trillion (RM3 trillion). Linking our economies together in this way is, in itself, a means of actively reducing conflict. Trade and investments are the building blocks to peace. After all, why would you wage war on your biggest market?"

Najib said Malaysia's experience in integrating cultures, languages and religions over the past half century had proven that the unity forged had resulted in stability, security and peace.

Malaysia has, and will continue, to play its role as a responsible global citizen by working with others to secure world peace.

"Malaysian peacekeepers had served under both the United Nations and Nato, and, from Somalia to the Balkans, Malaysian security personnel have made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of global stability."

Malaysia, Najib said, has, and will always, be willing to assist its neighbours in handling security issues such as in southern Philippines and southern Thailand.

"Bilaterally, we are working with the United States to combat crimes like drug trafficking, terrorism and fraud, and with Australia to tackle the issue of asylum seekers and to foster stability right across our region. Multilaterally, we are working to enforce the United Nations Security Council resolution on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction through our new Strategic Trade Act."

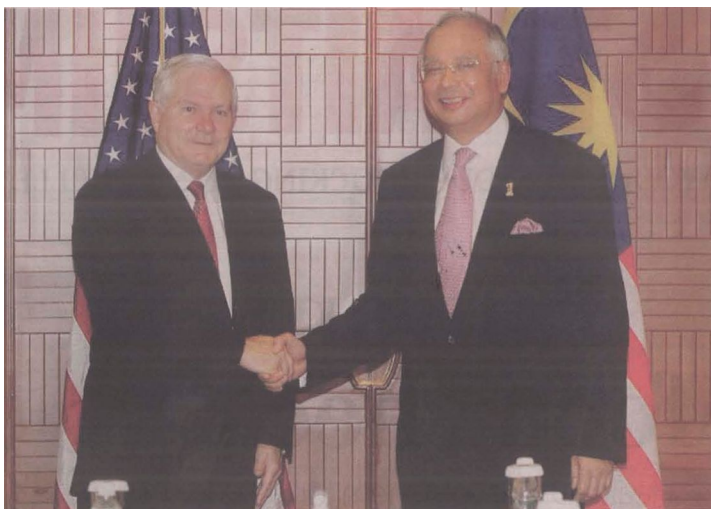
Najib also said Malaysia had always chosen to handle its border disputes through consultations.

"With Thailand, for example, we created a joint development area, with both countries agreeing to share mineral resources. With Singapore, a peaceful and diplomatic appeal to the International Court of Justice resulted in an amicable ruling that was accepted by both sides."

"And with Brunei, a solution was found on the basis of a mutually beneficial formula with a production-sharing agreement put into place."

Najib said all border disputes could be resolved in the same spirit of mutual respect and cooperation.

Najib also said the Asean Regional Forum (ARF) and Asean Defence Ministers Meeting (AMM) Plus 8 were exploring cooperation in disaster re-



US Secretary of Defence Robert Gates (left) greeting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak at the 10th International Institute of Strategic Studies Asia Security Summit in Singapore yesterday. — AFP picture

lief and humanitarian assistance.

He called for the establishment of a regional humanitarian body in the form of a new rapid response team with the ability to respond to disasters. Such activities were relevant because they would foster direct interaction between the defence and security agencies of different countries, going beyond formal declarations and high level dialogues to co-ordinated operations on the ground.

He laid down what he described as the "six practical principles" of Asean regional security cooperation:

- The recognition of the role of each member state irrespective of their wealth and size.
- Appreciation of every member country's uniqueness in term of history, culture and economic position.
- The need for confidence-building measures to be put in place to foster a deeper understanding and dialogue between each member country.
- The creation of a web of different forms of security architecture, not only regional and with the cooperation of extra-regional powers, but also within the context of bilateral arrangements.
- The building of institutional relationships—relationships not just at the highest levels but between institutions of each respective member countries.

• Not letting "difficulties" between member countries derail combined efforts already in place, but instead, building on those efforts to resolve disputes.

He reiterated his call at the UN last year for the creation of the "Movement of Moderates" that would see government, business and religious leaders around the world face down extremism wherever it is found.

"Because just as you cannot make the world a better place by passing a law proclaiming that it will be better, you cannot rid the world of extreme views simply by making them illegal — and I have no doubt that we can best foster tolerance and understanding, not by silencing the voice of hatred, but by making the voice of reason louder," he said.

"As responsible leaders, we cannot squander the opportunity before us to help build a new world order where a just and equitable peace predicated on the rule of law is the norm rather than the exception — and we know that governments who do not practice good governance are existing on borrowed time."

During a question and answer session after giving his keynote address, Najib said the world need not fear the rise of China and India as economic or military entities.

He said the two countries were al-

ready party to many alliances at South East Asian level and having the two prosper was for greater good.

"Both countries are part of Asean architecture such as the Asean Plus 3 and East Asia Summit. They are quite happy to accept the centrality of Asean and that is their position."

Najib said Asean was for all in engaging constructive relationship with the two superpowers. "As Asean, we don't have to make a choice (between the two countries) and go back to the cold war mentality. We want constructive relationship with the two countries."

On another question on control of conventional arms among nations, Najib said there would be no such threat if each country maintains its multilateral security policies.

Growing military strength was proof of a country's modernisation.

Earlier in the day, he held bilateral meetings with Singapore's acting Prime Minister Teo Chee Meen and US Secretary of Defence Robert Gates.

The IISS Asia Security Summit, also known as the Shangri-La Dialogue is an annual forum organised by the International Institute of Strategic Studies since 2002.

It brings together representatives of its 28 member countries from the Asia-Pacific region and Europe.