

DR M: BE VIGILANT AGAINST BIG POWERS

Malaysia, Asean must not let them intervene in the region, says PM

KUALA LUMPUR

PRIME Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday said big-power rivalry and foreign interference in the Middle East are reminders why Malaysia and Asean must be vigilant.

“Countries in the region will be forced to buy weapons from the big powers so that they can fight each other, resulting in the latter making profits while Asean becomes impoverished and unstable.

“We are beginning to see the seeds of confrontation and rivalry in our region. Lines are being drawn. Bases being built. Armadas being readied.

“The pressure is on to take sides,” he said during the “Stand With Yemen” symposium and

photo exhibition here.

His speech was read out by Foreign Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia would work with Asean to upgrade regional frameworks to leave no room for big-power intervention and to ensure that the rivalry between the United States and China did not lead to regional fractures.

“Malaysia has always put its hopes on non-alignment, on being open and friendly to all countries. We will not take sides and neither will we rely on military alliances or strategic partnerships.

“This policy has served Malaysia and Asean well through the most intense periods of big-power rivalry in the past and will remain relevant as a security framework.

“Don’t expect us to join you and don’t expect us to fight your wars. We welcome those who come to help us build a stable, prosperous, open and interconnected region. We will spurn those who came to dominate or divide our

region into warring camps.”

He said it was a reminder that national unity was a foundation for national security.

“While Malaysia is fortunate to have a strong foundation in national unity, we must not take things for granted. We must overcome racial and religious differences, and build a strong and united nation that is respectful and tolerant of diversity and differences.”

He said democracy and political stability in the Middle East could not be built on the rubble of bombed-out cities.

He said cynics had every reason to conclude that talk about exporting democracy or building a New World order, or even fighting terrorism was a false construct to cover naked aggression to dominate a resource-rich region.

“Cities had been laid waste and infrastructure destroyed. One has only to survey the landscapes of Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen to see the reality.”

He said in the Middle East, disunity was at the heart of much of the instability as Muslim coun-



Foreign Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah (second from left) at the ‘Stand With Yemen’ symposium and photo exhibition in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. PIC FROM DATUK SAIFUDDIN ABDULLAH’S FACEBOOK

tries had been all too quick to demonise and attack each other instead of resolving their differences peacefully as brothers.

He questioned the sense of Islamic brotherhood, the sense of community as followers of the Prophet and commitment to the *ummah* as some were willing to cooperate with Israel.

On Yemen, Dr Mahathir said, Malaysia called upon the factions to give peace a chance and allow the peace agreement an opportunity to work.

“Priority must be given to ending the fighting and bombing so that civilians can receive food assistance and medical attention.

“If both the Yemeni factions need time to regain trust in each other, they should consider declaring Hodeidah an open city under temporary UN (United Na-

tions) control so that a safe zone can be established to provide humanitarian assistance. It is time for the killings to stop.”

He said the war in Yemen was entering its fourth year and the cost of human suffering beyond imagination.

He said what started out as a civil war had attracted outsiders. The merchants of death — the arms manufacturers and dealers — were quick to profit from the misery of war.

“Nations that style themselves as the bastion of democracy and human rights have fuelled the conflict in Yemen with billions of dollars in armed sales.

“Let’s call a spade a spade. It is hypocritical to talk about human rights and democracy while participating in the mass murder of innocent civilians.” **Bernama**

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