

Strong message for the UN

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's delivery of his maiden address at the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) was reminiscent of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who used to blaze the rostrums and forums with his fiery speeches against political hegemony, polarised international relations and exploitation of the poorer South by the developed economies.

Today, the world is confronted by a different set of problems - climate change, the endless flow of refugees, the potential for the Russian-Ukraine conflict to turn into a nuclear war, geopolitical conflicts threatening food security worldwide, the still unresolved Palestinian issue, burning of the Quran, and the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan and Myanmar, among others.

Anwar highlighted these issues, hitting out directly at Russia for the Ukraine conflict, the Myanmar regime for the various atrocities against its own people, and the Afghan government for excluding women from education and public life. He also spoke of the Madani concept with its core values that enhance the well-being of society.

I personally think Anwar's speech was one of the best at UNGA by a national

leader. Even Dr Mahathir during his heyday at UNGA did not directly hit out at countries and their leaders but usually beat around the bush to drive home his point.

It was reported that there weren't many people in the hall when Anwar delivered his address. The blame for this should lie squarely on UN secretary-general Antonio Guterres and his officials, who should give more emphasis on the general assembly as it is the main platform for heads of government and leaders to make known their stand and views on international affairs.

National delegations need to be reminded to ensure that their diplomats, representatives and officials attend the meetings and hear the speeches of world leaders. If this is not the case, why are they coming to New York for the UNGA? They might as well stay at home.

Anwar's address was significant in that he urged other nations to revive their faith in the UN as it was a global government set up to safeguard the peace and progress of mankind.

The UN has lost a lot of its influence and clout over the decades, and many nations are exploring alternatives like military alliances, political blocs, multi-

lateral trade groupings and regional associations.

Anwar used the term "mini-lateral" to refer to these groupings, which he described as "exclusive and exclusionary in nature", during his keynote address at the 36th Asia-Pacific Roundtable last month.

The UN has to regain its influence, respect and power by reforming its major institutions, particularly the Security Council, to keep abreast with the current needs and realities.

Snippets of Anwar's speech need to be broadcast on our TV channels during news bulletins so that Malaysians will know more about their nation's stand on diverse international issues, and also its re-emergence as a force to be reckoned with in global affairs.

Wisma Putra needs to be re-energised if Malaysia is to play a leading role in global forums, including Asean and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, again.

Top level diplomats and Foreign Ministry officials are needed, and fluency in English, Mandarin, Hindi, French, Spanish and Arabic will be vital.

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