

**'We are honest brokers'**  
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**By ROY GOH**

PLATFORM FOR PEACE: Warring nations can use Malaysia's moderate approach, says Najib

KUALA LUMPUR: MALAYSIA encourages others to use its moderate approach to brokering peace in southern Philippines as a template to end wars, including the Gaza crisis.

In his keynote address yesterday at the launch of the 3rd Umno International Forum titled "Conflict and conciliation in the people's politics: looking back or looking forward?", Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said the values of moderation helped replace intolerance, hatred and bigotry that prevailed during the 40-year-old conflict in the region.

"When two people quarrel, it is useful to find a third person who must be an honest broker."

He said Malaysia facilitated this role after it was entrusted with the task by the Philippine government and the Moro International Liberation Front (MILF).

The Philippine government and MILF signed a framework agreement on Oct 15 that resulted in the establishment of the autonomous Muslim homeland in Mindanao, or Bangsamoro.

"Once we have trust, the road towards peace and reconciliation will not be an arduous journey."

Present was an MILF entourage led by its chairman, Al-Haj Murad Ebrahim.

The forum was held in conjunction with the five-day Umno general assembly that starts today.

Najib, who called for a global movement for a culture of peace, said Malaysia's strategy in handling the southern Philippine episode could be applied to complex situations, such as the long-standing Gaza conflict.

"It's a hugely more complex issue, and when I was in Phnom Penh recently, I urged (United States) President (Barack) Obama to intervene (in the conflict).

"I am grateful he made many phone calls that night and some sort of peace is there for the time being," he said in reference to the ceasefire that ensued.

"We are hoping for the Middle East peace process to be resuscitated and it needs to be based on the principle that there is an honest broker who can be fair to Palestinians and Israelis."

He said patience was also important, as was the case for Malaysia, which started its role in 2001 by sending an international monitoring team to act as its eyes and ears on the ground to facilitate the peace process.

Najib said a core organisation comprising nations could also end conflicts, as shown in Europe with the formation of the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

He cited the formation of the Asean Community by 2015 as a prime example of a movement that could promote solidarity, peace and stability.

Najib stressed the importance of resorting to just military efforts in conflict-prevention efforts.

"The prevention of conflicts needs to be approached through political, humanitarian, economic and social measures."

On yesterday's forum, he said it was an important platform to discuss and share ideas and experiences to find out what went wrong and find ways to establish peace.

"Conflicts do not only take human lives.

"It also destroys communities and erodes development.

"But, more importantly, conflicts leave a legacy of fear, hostility and trauma.

"The hidden costs of war are rarely taken into account.

"The mass exodus of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants includes the very people upon whom the economy of a country depends on.

"This represents an enormous loss of human resource that could have contributed to the economic development of the country."

He said the effects of war on people's lives, the destruction of property and economic base, displacement, fear and physical insecurity, the growth of a culture of violence and the loss of human rights could never be measured.

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