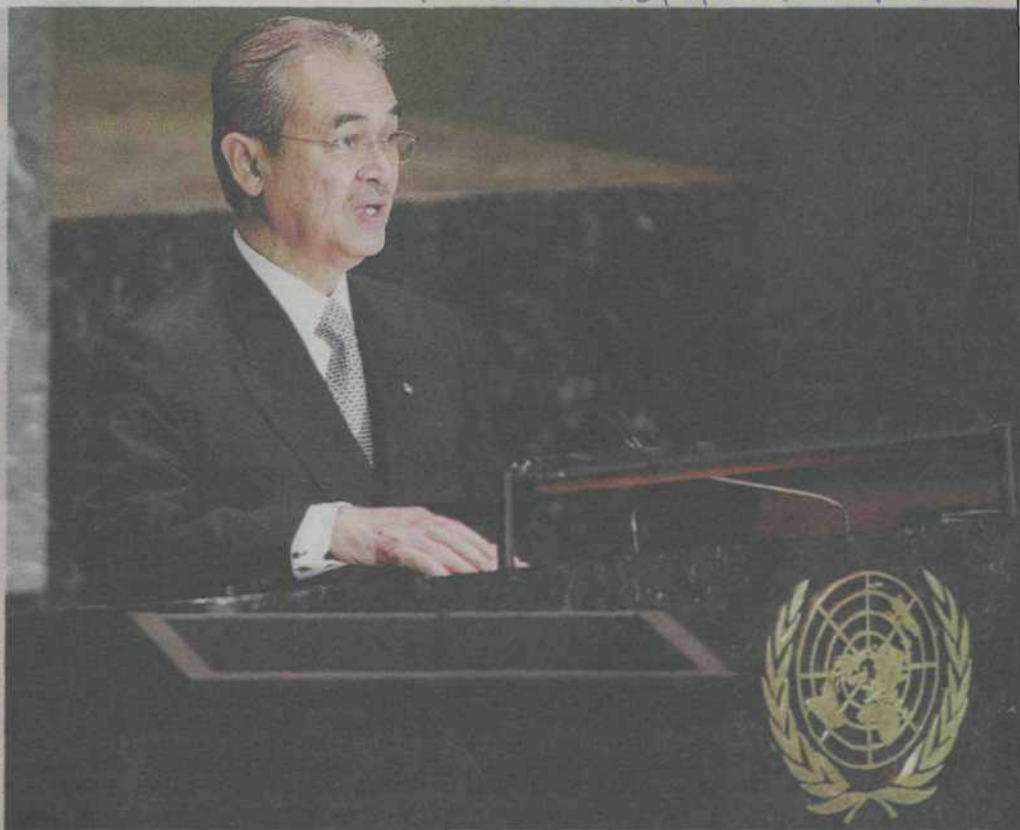


PM: Stop linking Islam to terrorism

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VOICING CONCERNS: Abdullah addressing the UN General Assembly in New York yesterday. — Reuterspic

BY JOHAN FERNANDEZ

NEW YORK: Malaysia has expressed great concern over the increasing tendency to link the fight against terrorism to the campaign against proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and linking international terrorism and Islam.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said that while Malaysia was fully committed to the cause of non-proliferation there must be multilateral negotiations for universal, comprehensive and non-discriminatory agreements and arrangements.

However, he said the most damaging of all was the increasing tendency to attribute linkages between international terrorism and Islam.

"The time has arrived for us to debunk, once and for all, the theory that there is a clash of civilisations," he told the 59th session of the United Nations General Assembly here yesterday.

"We must cease associating Islam with violence, poverty and indignity," he said, adding that in reality these troubles had nothing to do with Islam and neither were they exclusively in the domain of Muslims.

Although Abdullah has addressed the assembly on a number of occasions, this is the first time he is doing so as the Prime Minister of Malaysia and in his capacity as chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement and chairman of the 10th Summit of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC).

In calling for the United Nations to assume its proper role in combating international terrorism, he said Malaysia was convinced the fight against terrorism could not succeed through use of arms alone.

"To win it, we need to exert genuine efforts and demonstrate good faith to address the root causes of terrorism. One of the most obvious is the unaccomplished missions of people struggling for independence and aspiring

for sovereign states of their own," said Abdullah who was the first speaker yesterday.

He urged the United Nations to convene a special international conference to address all aspects of this issue, including the root causes of terrorism and state-sponsored terrorism.

On Iraq, Abdullah said the present situation called for the world body to be given the lead role, particularly for establishing stability in preparation for the elections scheduled for January.

He also called for a comprehensive and just solution to the problem faced by the suffering people of Palestine, saying that the Quartet had to play a more vigorous role in reviving the roadmap to peace in the Middle East.

He also urged the Security Council to be more democratic and representative of the number and geographical spread of its international membership.

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