

MALAYSIA

*in the
era of*

GLOBALISATION



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Excerpts of remarks made by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi at the conference of Malaysian Heads of Mission at Putrajaya Convention Centre on Monday

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THE thrust and purpose of Malaysia's foreign policy have always been, and will continue to be, the protection and promotion of national interest.

Malaysia has no ideology to export and it has no secret agenda to carry out anywhere in the world.

We will, however, work to promote the establishment of a regional and international environment that is stable and peaceful.

The world needs a global environment which is conducive to the development of an equitable and just international order. Instead, the world now faces traditional as well as non-conventional threats to international peace and security.

The divide between developed and developing countries keeps widening. There is uneasiness worldwide that a single country is globally dominating all the military, economic, political and cultural dimensions of power.

We must, therefore, purposefully work to bring about peace in the world because peace is not self-creating. Although the Cold War ended with the collapse of the Soviet system in 1990, the nature of relations between nations remains mired by the inclination of the rich and powerful to exert control and influence in various aspects of international life.

Today, this is done in the name of globalisation. Malaysia must strive to continue maintaining an independent and non-aligned foreign policy in order to be able to exercise flexibility in safeguarding the national interest.

The proponents of globalisation say that, in order to create new capacities for increasing global prosperity, it is necessary to progressively dismantle borders between countries and remove other barriers between peoples. Regrettably, we note that there is much selectivity in practice.

The driving force of the globalisation process is basically economic, but its ramifications overflow into the strategic and other spheres of international relations.

Therefore, in the face of these moves to create new regimes and new rules, Malaysia must campaign to secure sufficient policy space to cater for national as well as international interests — for itself and for other developing countries.

Malaysia must continue to advocate that the process of globalisation should include the prospering and empowerment of the developing countries, not their continued impoverishment and dependence on the wealthy and developed world.

As current chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and chairman of the Islamic Summit Conference, it is in fact a duty for Malaysia to take a fresh lead in this critical issue.

At the same time, we need to exercise leadership on other pressing international issues as well, particularly at the multilateral level.

One of the most critical international issues today concerns the question of safeguarding the fundamental foundation of the international system. I am referring to the vital need to respect the sovereignty of nations which make up the international system. In this regard, Malaysia believes that only a universal commitment to multilateralism will avert the destruction of that foundation.

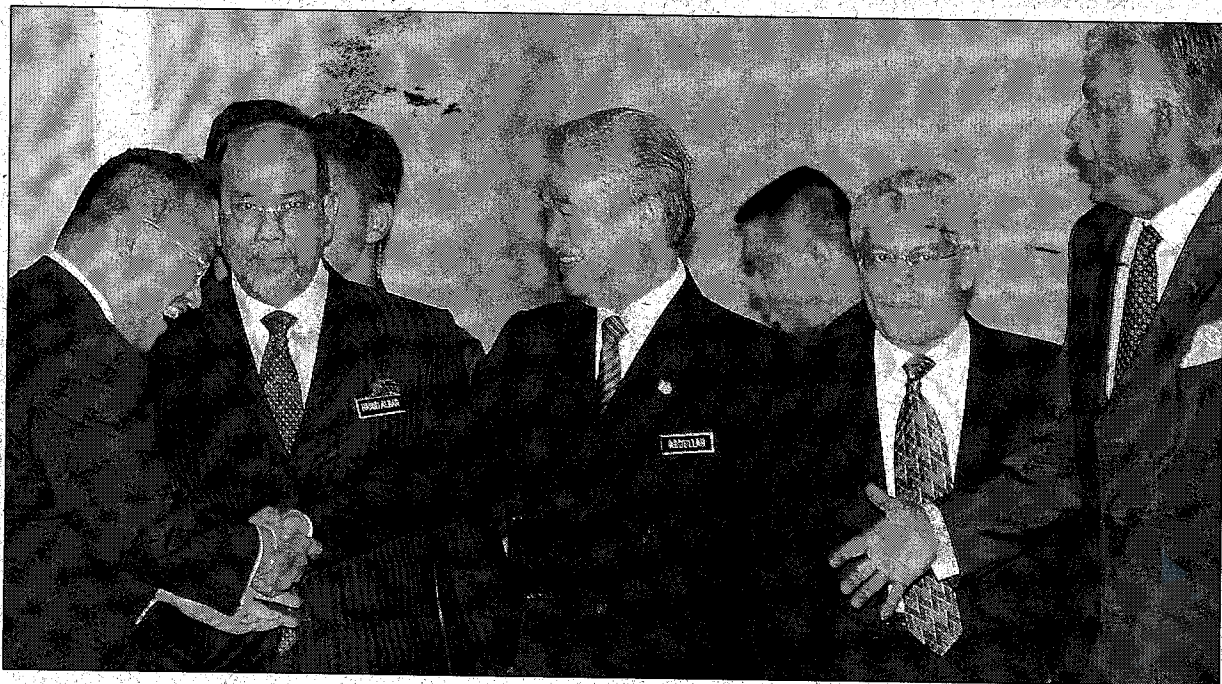
The international community relies upon the United Nations to provide protection for the sovereignty of its member states.

On Iraq

However, the United Nations was effectively sidelined, in March 2003, when the United States and its coalition partners decided to unilaterally invade and occupy Iraq.

This episode shattered the confidence of the world's people in the inviolability of national sovereignty. It removed the safety provided by the principle of territorial integrity.

International law, it seemed, could no longer be relied upon to safeguard the sanctity and security of the nation state.



INSPIRED: Abdullah, accompanied by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar (second from left) and ministry secretary-general Tan Sri Ahmad Fuzi Abdul Razak (second from right) meeting heads of mission after giving his speech.

The full political impact of the invasion and occupation on Iraq, on the Middle East and on the rest of the world is still unclear. Nevertheless, Malaysia welcomes the transfer of sovereignty that has taken place from the Coalition Provisional Authority to the Interim Government of Iraq.

The international community expects that this important step will lead to the smooth transition to full sovereignty in accordance with the time frame already set in UN Security Council Resolution No.1546/2004.

In this connection, Malaysia continues to hold the view that the United Nations has an important role to play, not only in the transition process but also in the reconstruction of Iraq. Malaysia hopes, therefore, that the new Government in Iraq would find it expedient to involve the United Nations in ways which it considers appropriate and beneficial for Iraq.

The events surrounding the case of Iraq is symptomatic of the prevailing dominance of unilateralism over multilateralism. For the survival of the international system, we need to promote a return to reason and moderation through dialogue and reconciliation. This is especially needed in the wake of the uncompromising and escalating extremism on different sides of the ideological divide.

Malaysia calls upon the international community to unite in strengthening the United Nations and restore to the organisation its prestige and effectiveness.

On Palestine

The United Nations must be empowered not only to maintain international peace and security but also to be the reliable guarantor of the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries.

In this regard, the problem of Palestine remains an urgent and important issue requiring a comprehensive and durable solution.

The plight of the people of Palestine cannot be ignored because if we do so, we would seriously put at risk the peace and security of the world.

The international community must be resolute in upholding the rights of the Palestinian people to national independence and the exercise of sovereignty in their own state, Palestine. After all, the road map for peace in the Middle East speaks of 2005 as the year for granting to Palestine its status as a nation state.

The international community must also not allow the world to continue to be segregated between areas of relative stability and economic growth and regions of instability and poverty. The best prospects for closing the gap between the rich and the poor of the world lie in establishing fair and equitable rules for international economic relations, and by making available adequate resources for effective international development co-operation.

Malaysia should propagate the view that multilateralism, through the United Nations, is the best option for fostering meaningful North-South partnership not only for economic and social development but also for securing international peace and security.

In the process of multilateral negotiations, Malaysia must keep emphasising the imperative for solidarity among developing countries, who should improve their negotiating strength by pooling resources in worldwide groupings such as the Group of 77, NAM and OIC.

There could be situations, however, which require Malaysia to work with particular caucuses of like-minded countries to advance specific issues or advocate specific positions in the context of negotiations.

Should the circumstances so dictate, Malaysia must be ready to act accordingly. It should be possible to be pragmatic yet principled in Malaysia's approaches to issues or towards other countries. When ap-

plying the principle of "Malaysia first", we must of course do so without abandoning our international responsibilities and obligations.

It should be a continuing priority for NAM and OIC to work closely to initiate reforms in the workings of the United Nations, in particular the functioning of the UN Security Council. They must persist in articulating the fact that global peace can be better assured if there is fairness and justice in the management of world affairs.

NAM and OIC must also work hand-in-hand with the Group of 77 to advance the economic interests of developing countries in general, and in particular to achieve a fair and equitable multilateral trading system in the ongoing WTO negotiations.

The OIC, as a group, has a special responsibility to strengthen unity and arrest the creeping disunity among the Muslim Ummah. It would indeed be productive for us to focus more on matters that unite us rather than dwell on issues which divide us. The OIC must also address, in a

concerted manner, the increasing prejudice against Muslims worldwide and the growing schism between the Muslim and the Western world.

On Asean

The advent of globalisation, or the significance of multilateralism, does not diminish the relevance of regionalism. In Southeast Asia, Asean is the embodiment of this relevance.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the region was in turmoil.

The formation of Malaysia (in 1963) was met with *konfrontasi* from Indonesia and the Philippines made claims to Sabah; while communism was making inroads in continental Southeast Asia. The creation of Asean in 1967 brought peace and Asean has kept the peace among regional countries ever since. That is the measure of its value to Malaysia and other regional countries.

Asean has thrived because of its strategic importance. In the face of globalisation, Malaysia must do everything possible to strengthen Asean and enhance its standing in world affairs. We must support steps, even incremental steps, to institute higher political and economic integration with a view to establishing the Asean Community envisaged in the Declaration of Asean Concord II of 2003.

Asean must be enabled, more and more, to speak with one voice in various international forums, especially on issues of regional peace and security.

Malaysia should take the opportunity to advance Asean cohesion when it assumes the chairmanship of the regional organisation in 2005.

We must build upon the successes achieved in the Asean Regional Forum (ARF), which was initiated by Asean in 1994, in response to the new regional security situation following the ending of the Cold War. Asean countries must maintain unity of purpose within the ARF process.

Otherwise, Asean risks losing its influence to advance the strategic interests of Asean countries, which was the original purpose of the ARF.

Worse, the ARF process itself risks losing its pre-eminence as a regional security forum to other emerging processes or regional dialogues.

The standing and influence of Asean countries in regional as well as international affairs can be further enhanced by upgrading the dialogue relationship that Asean now has with China, Japan and the Republic of Korea.

Malaysia must persevere in the diplomatic efforts required to find consensus to upgrade the Asean+3 process to become a gathering of equal partnership such as in an East Asia Summit meeting.

The creation of such a forum will ensure a deeper commitment by the three East Asian partners to the development and prosperity of the 10 countries in Southeast Asia.

Malaysia is keenly aware that, in order to develop and prosper, it is quite impossible to do so alone on its own except in partnership with other countries in the region and the rest of the world. In fact, Malaysia must accelerate its economic diplomacy, not only at the bilateral but also at the regional and global levels, as an important dimension of its international relations and for purposes of securing the country's wider foreign policy objectives. Malaysia wishes to have friendly relations with all countries and be enemies with none.

There could be occasions when the Government of Malaysia may have differences of views with other Governments on certain issues, but people-to-people relations should remain separate. Malaysia has no wish to impose its ideas and values on other people. We would, however, be willing to share our experiences and knowledge, particularly with other developing countries.

In the conduct of bilateral relations with other countries, Malaysia shall always be guided by the fundamental principles enshrined in the 1976 Treaty of Amity and Co-operation in Southeast Asia, in particular the principle of:

- Mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity;
- Non-interference in the internal

affairs of one another; and,

● Settlement of disputes by peaceful means.

Malaysia wishes to advocate that these principles be accepted as binding in inter-state conduct, including the fight against terrorism at the national, regional or international level.

Post-Sept 11

The events of Sept 11, 2001 had brought to the fore a realisation, in a manner never envisioned until then, that non-state actors, even individuals, could possess destructive capabilities which were normally the preserve of agents of the nation states.

The empowerment of non-state actors, including terrorists, equipped with modern technologies and advanced communications and information systems is without doubt an unanticipated by-product of the processes of globalisation. The terrorists are able to commit crimes even across national frontiers.

The experiences since Sept 11 brought to the fore another realisation, and that is the inadequacy of military action alone as a means of destroying the terrorist networks or removing the scourge of terrorism completely.

It would be instructive to acknowledge that the fight against terrorism is also a battle for the minds of the perpetrators.

Terrorism will not disappear if the methods used to hunt down terrorists lead to the breeding of new recruits. Terrorism will not be crushed unless the root causes are eliminated.

Terrorism is clearly a new international problem. The international community must agree to identify and define, dispassionately, the root causes of terrorism.

It is definitely oversimplifying for anyone to suggest that the solution lies in bringing democracy and good governance everywhere. The matter is not as simple as that.

It would also be necessary to acknowledge that the methods we employ may need to vary from place to place or from time to time.

We must furthermore agree on the appropriate regional and international forums that would be most suited to discuss and formulate responses to the new challenges posed by international terrorism as a non-conventional security issue.

Now, the fight against terrorism has become entwined with the campaign against proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Developing countries suffer most by the constraints imposed on access to peaceful uses of technology, equipment and material necessary for their economic development.

Malaysia is fully and firmly committed to the cause of non-proliferation. But we do not agree that the issues involved be addressed on a unilateral basis.

There must be multilateral negotiations for universal, comprehensive and non-discriminatory agreements and arrangements.

Above all, nothing should be done at the expense of the priority which should be reserved for the international development agenda.

In my remarks today, I have deliberately made references to several dates. The purpose is to place a historical perspective to the issues and events that I have spoken about.

I strongly believe in the power of learning from history, especially in the realm of foreign policy.

Although the history of Malaysian diplomacy is relatively short, spanning less than 50 years, we have gone through quite a lot.

Of course, we must not be dwelling on the past but be focused on the future. History should not dictate our actions but it can serve as a guide for us to make correct judgments and wise decisions in dealing with the present and the future.

In preparing for the next 50 years, we must never forget the lessons learnt during the last 50.

In the formulation and implementation of Malaysia's foreign policy, the leadership role of Wisma Putra in this matter will become more important and crucial in the years ahead as the issues to be faced by the country become more complex and multifaceted.

As heads of Malaysian diplomatic missions abroad, you must exercise leadership among personnel serving in your host country.

You should establish ways and means to gather quality information; be competent to discuss difficult issues with your foreign interlocutors and make sound recommendations to the Government at home.

You should sharpen your negotiating skills so as to match the best of the best in the craft of diplomacy.

You need to inculcate a culture of excellence and a commitment to high performance. You must have the passion and pride for the tasks you are undertaking and that these two qualities be translated into something useful and beneficial for Malaysia.