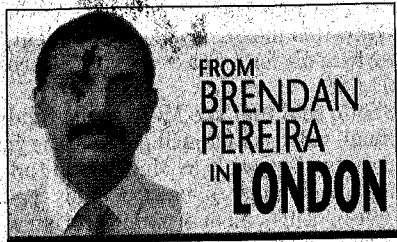


We're a shining example

NST - 24/7/2004 : 1 & 2 Perdana



ONE fact has become obvious during the Prime Minister's week-long tour of the United States, France and Britain: All these world powers believe that Malaysia has something tangible to offer to the Muslim and developing world.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair became the latest leader to endorse the country's brand of progressive Islam and said it should be replicated in other parts of the Muslim world. He said this during a one-hour meeting with Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi at 10 Downing Street on Thursday.

A wide range of issues was discussed at the meeting, including the security situation in Southeast Asia, the trouble spots in the Middle East and the tendency to lump Islam and terrorism together.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, who attended the meeting, said that the rapport struck between the two leaders was exceptional. Blair said that he had heard so much about development in Malaysia.

"He said that he would very much like to see Kuala Lumpur. Pak Lah extended an invitation to him.

"The British PM saw Malaysia as a model Islamic state that has got tolerance and harmony. It is something he feels that needs to be emulated. The UK recognises Malaysia's leadership in the Islamic and developing world because we have got a track record of success," said Syed Hamid at a briefing for the Malaysian media.

A question-and-answer session after Abdullah delivered a speech to over 400 members of the British business community here yesterday also saw a reinforcement of the belief that Malaysia had some answers for the Muslim and developing world.

After giving his insight into the policies and values that underpin Malaysia's success, he was asked by several Muslims in the audience if Malaysia could be a catalyst for development in the rest of the Muslim



WELCOME: Abdullah with Blair at No 10 Downing Street. — AFP picture

world.

In his meeting with Blair, Abdullah spoke about the importance of nurturing the dialogue of civilisations.

He said that it was crucial to continue this dialogue so that goodwill could be created.

He was also dismayed by what he called the profiling of Muslims — the tendency to link those who profess Islam with any acts of

terror or violence.

It is an issue which he also raised with US President George W. Bush and French President Jacques Chirac.

During his speech to the Asia House, a non-profit organisation devoted to improving understanding of Asia in the UK, he elaborated on the profiling of Muslims.

"In making a judgment on Islam and on

the Muslims who declare Islam as their faith, it is vitally important to understand that misguided Islam can do as much damage as misguided Christianity.

Misguided Islam is not Islam, in very much the same way that misguided Christianity is not Christianity.

Britain shares Malaysia's views on UN role in multilateral world

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"And the evil deeds of evil Muslims are no more to be identified with Islam and Muslims than the evil deeds of evil Christians are to be identified with Christianity and Christians," he said to robust applause from the audience.

In his meeting with Blair, Abdullah also

gave his views in his capacity as the chairman of the Organisation of Islamic Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement.

Both Britain and Malaysia shared the view that the United Nations had an important role to play in a multilateral world. The road map for a Palestinian state was discussed as was the situation in Iraq.

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Both leaders exchanged views on the upcoming elections in Iraq and the importance of ensuring that there was stability in the country. They felt that the polls were a great opportunity for Iraqis to select leaders of their own choice.

On the second day of his three-day visit here, Abdullah met British businessmen, and

senior leaders of the Muslim community and also visited the London Muslim Centre.

At the centre, he urged Muslims to project a good image of themselves and to stay away from anything that could divide them. It was also important to show the willingness to work and interact with people of other religions.