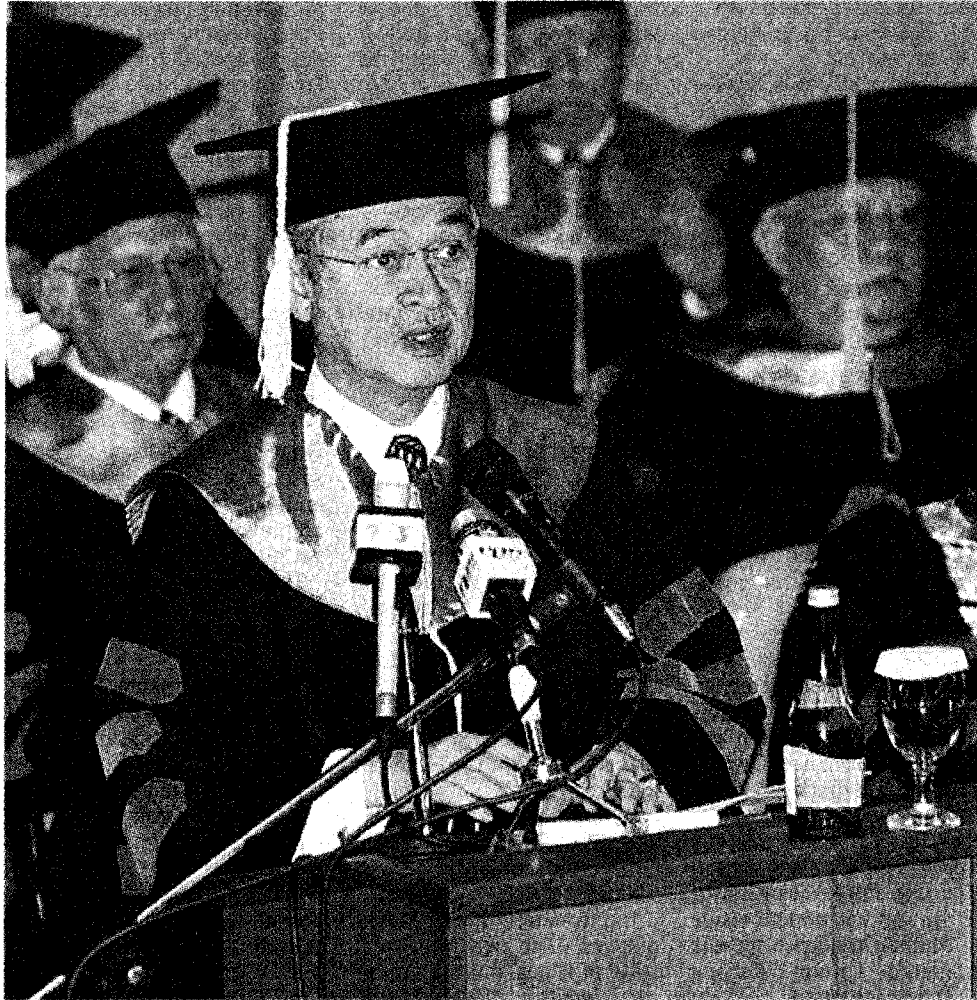


UN rapped over inaction

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GIVING HIS VIEWS: Abdullah making a speech after being conferred an honorary doctorate in Islamic Thought at the Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University in Jakarta yesterday. — APpic

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JAKARTA: Malaysia has lashed out at the United Nations for being unable to stop the Israeli attack against Lebanon, and also rapped Muslim countries for their inaction.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the series of actions by the West against Muslim countries in West Asia had brought about new tension between the two sides.

The Prime Minister cited the attack on Lebanon, the injustices against the Palestinian people, and the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, as examples.

"The provocative caricature episode earlier this year brought new heights of tension between the world's two great civilisations," he said.

The remarks by Abdullah, who heads the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, are the strongest since the attack by Israel against Lebanon.

He said this at the Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University here, where he was conferred an honorary doctorate in Islamic Thought yesterday.

Abdullah said the case of Lebanon was a "very sad commentary on the issue of morality in the conduct of international affairs."

"Even the United Nations, our

best hope for international peace and security, is in apparent paralysis and unable to act," he said.

"Quite clearly, the power of 'the veto' is at work not only in the corridors of the United Nations but also on the ground in the Middle East."

The Prime Minister also criticised Muslim nations for failing to prevent an invasion of Lebanon.

"Our own internal sectarian conflicts have weakened us and these have been the major cause of Muslim disunity," he said.

Abdullah said the world must continue to demand that the UN declare a ceasefire, deploy a UN peacekeeping force to implement a ceasefire, and prevent an invasion of Lebanon by Israel.

The Prime Minister also said that many Western countries had allowed their foreign policies to be flawed by the misinterpretation of Islam.

"It is this state of affairs which has caused much of the antagonism which prevails today between the West and the Islamic world," he said.

"Its negative ramifications on international peace and security are easy to illustrate in real life and in real time, just as they account for much of the injustices against the Palestinian people, the unbridled invasion

of Afghanistan, the illegal occupation of Iraq, the threats against Iran and now the assault on Lebanon."

Malaysia, he said, proposed an organised and sustained dialogue between Muslim nations and the West.

Abdullah said many forums had been held, but a concerted international effort had yet to be conducted.

"Most of the forums have taken place at the level of private individuals or non-governmental organisations," he noted.

"Dialogue will be fruitless unless followed by concrete action. Only governments can initiate and sustain tangible action both domestically and internationally.

"Therefore, a point has to be reached when the dialogue involves governments in conference."

Abdullah said scholars, experts and non-governmental activists could participate as resource persons, and they could contribute through second-track forums.

Such a dialogue, he said, could only be successful if the West would accept that Islam was not merely a religion but a whole way of life for its believers.

■ See www.thestar.com.my for the full text of the Prime Minister's speech.