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(PRIME MINISTER)

EVENT: PRESENTATION OF MALAYSIA'S GIFT TO THE UNITED NATIONS

VENUE: NEW YORK

DATE: 25 SEP 2003

TIME:

I am indeed very pleased to be here in New York to attend the 58th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. This is the forty-sixth time that a Malaysian delegation has attended the General Assembly since Malaysia became a member of the United Nations on 17 September 1957. After 46 years as a member of this Organization, Malaysia is now pleased to present a gift to the United Nations. Many other countries have already done so. Today, I am truly very happy to be able to present this gift from the Government and people of Malaysia to the United Nations.

2. This gift from Malaysia is a betel quid set, or "tepak sireh" in the Malay language. In Malaysia, in the olden days the "tepak sireh" had a significant part in conversations, negotiations and important ceremonies in the royal courts, village gatherings and in the homes of the ordinary people. The betel leaf was offered to guests, in many instances as a means to start conversations going. The "tepak sireh" remains today as a centerpiece during traditional ceremonies.

3. The "tepak sireh" is thus an important symbol of diplomacy, dialogue, friendship and cooperation. This is what the United Nations symbolizes and should stand for during these trying times. This "tepak sireh" is a variation of the traditional "tepak sireh", conceived and designed by Malaysians to embody the spirit of harmony and unity that exists within the diverse ethnic and cultural milieu in Malaysia. On the international plane it embodies the diversity among the many nations that have placed their hopes and trust in the United Nations. This "tepak sireh" is supported by four traditional Malay weapons. The fact that these weapons are securely sheathed in their scabbard, testifies to the peaceful intentions of the Malaysian people and their hope for peace to prevail at all times.

4. This gift signifies Malaysia's strong commitment to the United Nations. It is also for everyone to share and perhaps admire. I hope that all visitors to the United Nations will recognise "Malaysia's" commitment to peace and harmony through this symbol.

5. Please accept this gift from the Government and people of Malaysia.