Rao: Need for bigger Asian role in UN Security Council

By Shireeshan

Indian Prime Minster Narasimha Rao yesterday underscored the need to look afresh at the United Nations (UN) Security Council.

Addressing a forum organised by the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, Rao said nations cannot isolate themselves, that decisions imposed by some national interests are equally good for all nations.

"The composition of the UN Security Council must reflect contemporary realities, particularly the large number of developing countries who do not find a voice in this forum," he said.

A blueprint for the future of the world, he added, will be incomplete unless it stresses the role that the Asian continent must play. He noted that Asia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) base is set to grow to US$28 trillion (US$1 = RM2.46) in the year 2020 from US$13 trillion in 1990.

Rao delivered an address on "The Post-Cold War Scenario: A blueprint for the Future". He is in the country for a four-day visit and will leave tomorrow.

Earlier, Rao said greater interaction between Asean and India is long overdue and can be realised through India's sectoral dialogue with Asean. India has been a sectoral dialogue partner in trade, investment, tourism and science and technology with Asean since 1993.

In his address, Rao said Asean has shown the way to successful multilateral engagement by setting up "concentric layers" of multilateral cooperation.

"Asean members have avoided expanding their core group and have restricted themselves to a group of culturally homogenous states.

"India, too, has promoted sub-regional cooperation through the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc)," he added.

He also noted that nations must not lose sight of the ultimate aim in multilateral negotiations, which is "the highest common good for the highest number".

In reply to questions on the likelihood that India's investments abroad will be affected by the scrapping of US-based Enron Corp's US$2.8 billion (US$1 = RM2.46) project in the Maharashtra state, Rao replied:

"I come into this picture only as the central government having given a counter guarantee. If the Maharashtra State Government has not paid these people then they can come and catch hold of my throat and say "you pay your cheque"."