

# ***PM: Don't take sides in fighting terrorism***

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By SA'ODAH ELIAS

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday cautioned countries against taking sides in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington and instead urged all world leaders to sit together and look for a lasting solution to the problem.

Dr Mahathir said that the root cause of the problem should be identified and addressed.

"I am of the view that the world should discuss the problem seriously without taking sides.

"Muslim nations should not support only their Muslim brothers, and non-Muslim countries should not support only non-Muslim countries. The positions taken by countries should not be based on who are friends and who are foes.

"We must view terrorism as a crime against humanity which must be tackled by the world as one without any nation taking sides," he said, adding that Malaysia was against violent retaliation

against any party found directly or indirectly responsible for the attack.

Violent retaliation would not solve the problem but would instead beget more violence, he told reporters after signing a condolence book for the public at the US Embassy here for victims of Tuesday's terrorist attacks in New York and Washington. He was accompanied by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar.

When asked about the government's efforts to curb terrorism in the country, Dr Mahathir said: "We have to be on the alert at all times because, in terrorism, there is no period when it will end. We have to be continuously alert."

Commenting on a report of hostility and violence against Muslims in the United States following the attack, Dr Mahathir said it was expected as people were angry and their emotions were running high.

"I hope the hostility will end once people overcome their emotions and that the authorities will take action to curb it as soon as possible," he said.