

Dr M: We support US bid to find attackers

By SA'ODAH ELIAS

PUTRAJAYA: Malaysia will support every effort taken by the United States to track the terrorists believed to be responsible for the recent attacks on New York and Washington and will provide whatever assistance and information needed for the purpose.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Government's stand on the issue of terrorism was very clear, stressing that any actions by the US government beyond hunting down the terrorists needed further review and justification.

"That is why I believe that the United Nations should organise a world conference on terrorism so that we can define terrorists because not all terrorists are Muslims.

"We need to find the root cause of terrorism and look for effective ways of handling the problem.

"Otherwise it will be a

never-ending sequence of 'I hit you, you hit me' and it will be the innocent people who will suffer most," he told a press conference at his office yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said he had written to British Prime Minister Tony Blair asking him to support the proposal, but had yet to receive a response from him.

Dr Mahathir said he had also pointed out in the letter that the issue of terrorism must be discussed in total without sidelining its causes like with what was happening in Israel and other countries where terrorism was sanctioned.

He said identifying the cause of terrorism was important in understanding why some terrorists were willing to go to the extent of committing suicide.

He said Malaysia had always maintained the stand that preliminary action must be taken with regards to the issue of Palestine like sending an observer team to Israel but this was rejected.

"We feel that if this step is taken, the world community can move forward to try to look for a lasting solution to the problem of terrorism," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Government's investigations to date showed that there was no basis for the allegation that Osama bin Laden or any other

individual whose names were included in the US list of suspected terrorists had kept their money in banks in the country.

He said Malaysian authorities had scrutinised the list of suspected terrorists provided by the United States and had found no evidence that any one of them had used the services of any Malaysian bank to hide their money.

"Even if it is true that some terrorists or their outfits are using our banks, that does not mean that we are condoning terrorism or harbouring terrorists on our soil.

"We will co-operate fully with the US authority on this matter," he said.

He said the Government would also extradite any individuals arrested if there was an extradition treaty between the country concerned and Malaysia.

"We are prepared to do that, but so far, people arrested for such activities are locals and their involvement is limited to this country," he added.