

PM: Malaysia rejects use of violence to resolve problems

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THE Government yesterday rejected and condemned the use of violence, stressing that it should never be an option to resolve any problem or dissatisfaction.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said violence was never an option in Malaysia and the Government strongly opposed its use by anyone.

He told Datuk Ahmad Husni Mohd Hanadzlah (BN-Tambun) that violence should not be identified with Muslims only as there had been instances of others involved in violent acts.

"The Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Christians and even atheists also engage in violence and it is, therefore, unfair to link violence with Islam," he said.

Wars only affected innocent people as the terrorists themselves may not be affected at all.

"Even if they (terrorists) are caught or killed, there is no guarantee that others would not take their place," he said, adding that this was why Malaysia was against the use of violence.

To restore the image of Islam, he said Muslim countries and their people must act rationally.

"Muslim countries must push for an international conference of Islamic countries and also for another involving all countries to discuss the issue of terrorism and its interpretations (*tafsiran*)."

Dr Mahathir added that international laws must be enacted to curb violence and terrorism.

"Only if the Organisation of Islamic Conference acts rationally in facing the issue of terrorism can the image of Islam be restored," he said.

To a supplementary question from Ahmad Husni, Dr Mahathir said Malaysians were also directly or indirectly involved in the conflict as there were those who were

of the opinion that Muslims around the world supported terrorism.

"This is not true," he said, adding that this had caused great problems to the extent that even a Sikh, wearing a turban, was mistakenly shot dead in Texas.

"Be careful when you (referring to the Sikhs here) go overseas, we love all of you and would not want anything to happen to you," he said in a lighter vein.

To a supplementary question from Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang (Pas-Marang), Dr Mahathir said without a proper definition, anybody could be termed a terrorist although they were actually fighting to free the country from colonialists.

He said these people were termed as terrorists by the colonialists and were hunted down, but when they were victorious and ruled the country, they were no longer considered terrorists.

"For example, in Kenya, when Jomo Kenyatta fought the British, he was called a terrorist.

"But when the British conceded

defeat and he (Jomo) was made Kenya's first President, he was no longer considered a terrorist."

However, he said to achieve whatever their aim was, they should not resort to means that affected the lives of innocent people.

Malaysia did not accept US President George W. Bush's statement that countries which did not support the US were on the side of the terrorists.

"We cannot accept this.

"However, we must also remember that when Bush made the statement, he was still very angry over the attacks on his country.

"However, during my recent telephone conversation with him, he was very rational and there was no mention of this."

Malaysia's stand was very simple in that it opposed the use of violence but this in no way meant it supported terrorists.

To a supplementary question from Dr Tan Seng Giaw (DAP-Keppong), Dr Mahathir said he had written to British Prime Minister Tony Blair explaining Malaysia's stand on the matter and he (Blair) had agreed there was a need for an international conference on terrorism.

"I also wrote to Bush telling him how Malaysia felt with regard to violence and he said he would discuss the matter further when we meet at the Apec meeting."

He said destroying Afghanistan would not be the solution as it was not the only country involved in terrorism.

"Those involved in terrorism are also from other countries and there is a possibility they may strike again.

"Therefore, I stress that the best way would be to hold the international conference and find a permanent resolution to the problem."