

Stop Mideast conflict: PM

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No end to terrorism without peace in Palestine, Mahathir tells Bush

SHANGHAI, Sat: Malaysia today told the United States that international terrorism will not end unless the Palestinian conflict is resolved.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he and US President George W. Bush agreed to differ on Malaysia's stand against the assault on Afghanistan's Taliban rulers during talks ahead of the 9th Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) leaders meeting here.

"I explained to him the need to remove the causes of terrorism and I singled out the problem in Palestine as the most important cause," Mahathir told reporters.

Bush also urged an end to the conflict and said he supported Palestinian aspirations for statehood, Mahathir said.

"We don't think this can be resolved overnight, but the solution of that problem, I pointed out, would resolve the feeling of frustration and anger in the Muslim world.

"It was a good meeting. I explained to him our support (against terrorism in general) and the reason why we find ourselves unable to support the operation against Afghanistan.

"He accepted the fact that we

may differ on certain positions but we see eye to eye on this very important issue of terrorism, and also the need to revive the world's economies because we feel that countries cannot develop unless world trade is restored," Mahathir added.

Bush said later he respected Mahathir's position on the Af-

ghan campaign and Malaysia's concern over the deaths of innocent people.

"I assured him (Mahathir) that ... we were trying to be as careful as we possibly could to achieve our military objective."

The two leaders also discussed the current wave of anthrax scares but Bush "did

not blame Malaysia, didn't link it to Malaysia at all," the prime minister said.

Mahathir also said Bush wanted bilateral relations between Malaysia and the US to be further strengthened. - Agencies