

# PM: Our stand not an obstruction

STAR 22 OCT 2001

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SHANGHAI: Malaysia's stand on the strikes in Afghanistan was not an obstruction towards the reaching of an agreement at the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (Apec) leaders' declaration, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

"What was included was adequate. It was a common stand and the leaders agreed that each (country) would act in its own way," he said, commenting on why the issue of

Afghanistan was not included in the Apec leaders' statement on counter-terrorism.

"Malaysia's stand is known and is not, in any way, an obstruction towards an agreement," he said.

Dr Mahathir pointed out that US ground forces had moved into Afghanistan and the action was likely to be more specific.

"It is an improvement (from the previous air strikes). We are not willing to support military action but such action (the placing of ground forces) might be nec-

essary," he said.

"Our view is that it will not be so easy and is likely to take a long time. They may have to chase (these terrorists) wherever they are, not just in Afghanistan," he told a packed press conference yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said he had spoken to many Apec leaders and among their suggestions included identifying the root causes of terrorism and going for a diplomatic offensive and resolution for the Middle East problem.

In response to further questions on his meeting with US

President George W. Bush, Dr Mahathir said: "The US will not stop (in Afghanistan) until it achieves its objective and as long as it believes there are terrorists there."

As a moderate Islamic country, Malaysia would ensure that acts of terror were stopped.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia's objection was also against the use of smart bombs and rockets.

"The Chinese Embassy in Yugoslavia was hit by smart bombs," he said.

He said leaders at the Apec

meeting agreed that the definition of terrorists should not be mixed with freedom fighters.

"We are concerned because in the past, those who were terrorists had become respectable like Jomo Kenyatta and Robert Mugabe. The IRA is considered terrorist in Britain but in the United States, it can raise funds," the Prime Minister explained.

He said an act of terror occurred when people committed acts like crashing into buildings where innocent people are working or strapping a

bomb onto their bodies and exploding it in a supermarket.

"One man's terrorist may be another man's freedom fighter," he said.

The Prime Minister said the Sept 11 terror attacks on the United States had a profound effect on the whole world which was rushing ahead with the notion that globalisation was a means of gaining tremendous wealth.

"Today, these people are in shock," he said.

"Absolute capitalism with emphasis on unlimited greed has been affected by Sept 11."