

Bombings must stop: Mahathir

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PETALING JAYA, Sat: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the United States should stop the bombing in Afghanistan as it is doing more damage to the civilians than to the Taliban or the Al Qaeda movement.

He hopes that the US will cease its operations immediately, whether or not it is because of the month of Ramadan.

"Whether it is Ramadan or not, I hope they (US) stop the bombing because it is not achieving anything and this is where we differ in opinion.

"But I am glad this is not held against Malaysia. In fact, even Russia feels the same, where diplomatic moves should be used instead," he told a press conference at the Royal Malaysian Air Force station in Subang here, on his return from South Korea, where he made a stopover after attending the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit in Shanghai last week.

Mahathir, who was asked whether the US should continue its bombing during Ramadan, said Malaysia's stand was that the bombings will only result in the loss of lives of civilians, rather than those of the targeted group be it the Taliban forces or the Al Qaeda movement said to be led by Osama bin Laden.

"As far as I know, there has not been any report confirming that any member of the Al Qaeda has been killed in the attacks," he said.

He reiterated Malaysia's stand that retaliatory strikes on Afghanistan were not the way to counter terrorism. The best way is to identify its root causes, he said.

On Friday, US Secretary

of State Colin Powell said the US does see the upcoming Ramadan as a deadline for halting or curtailing military operations in Afghanistan.

"We are sensitive to Ramadan but we can't let that be the sole determinant of whether we continue our military action," Powell had said.

Asked if it is time for the US to review its foreign pol-

icy, Mahathir said that during the Apec meeting in Shanghai, he had told President Bush about it, although it was not really well accepted.

"It is not for me to say whether they should review their foreign policy. All we have said was that they (US) should give consideration to problems faced by Palestinians and other Muslim nations," he said.