

'Terrorism cannot justify terrorism'

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun: The Sept 11 attacks on the United-States must be condemned, but "terrorism cannot justify terrorism".

These are two of five main points in the consensus reached by participants at the conference on terrorism.

Participants at the conference organised by the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS)

included top government officials, retired security personnel, academicians, political party leaders, media practitioners and representatives of non-governmental organisations.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi closed the conference yesterday.

Participants also agreed on the need for dialogue with the people in order to

"understand them better on basic issues." ISIS chairman and CEO Tan Sri Dr Noordin Sopiee said.

He said the root causes of terrorism must be addressed and that for as long as this is not done, the problem cannot be adequately dealt with.

"I think most people are against the bombing of Afghanistan and worry that this is a war, not against terrorism, but against Islam."

Noordin said the war against terrorism will be a long one and Malaysia will have to decide on various policies as new situations arise. He believes Malaysia can contribute towards bridging the gap between the Muslim and Western worlds.

"I think we are the most respected Muslim country in the world. This is not to

say we are great, but that the Muslim world respects us and (Prime Minister Datuk Seri) Dr Mahathir (Mohamad).

"We can, therefore, play an important role in the

Muslim world. But we will have to see whether the West wants us to play a role."

Noordin said the West may not view Malaysia's position favourably "because we are told, 'either you are with us or against us'."

"Almost every country in the world is pretending to be with the US 100%, but nobody is with the US 100%." Noordin thinks the West will need Malaysia as there are just a few moderate Muslim countries.

"However much they don't like the things we say, they will have to accept them."

"Unless they want an all-out war against Islam . . . which is suicidal (for them) because there are 1.2 billion Muslims and one can never underestimate the power of Islam."