

16 NOV 2001

Mahathir-Terrorism (Dialogue)

M'SIANS MUST DEFEND COUNTRY AGAINST TERRORISM, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 16 (Bernama) -- The Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysians are duty-bound to defend the country against any act of terror and reject terrorism as a means of struggle as there is no justification for anyone or group to create public fear.

"There is no justification in the act of terrorism although it was said to fight for noble cause," Dr Mahathir said at a dialogue with participants after opening a conference on terrorism at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

To a question from Malaysian Open University chief executive Tan Sri Dr Abdullah Sanusi Ahmad, the prime minister cited acts of terror committed by the KMM militant group and Al-Maunah which created fear among the people.

"They conducted the act of terror by killing people and taking the law into their own hands.

"We (the government) had to act in anticipation. Knowing their intention we have to act against them because finding proof to the crime that has yet to be committed is very difficult," he said.

Describing terrorists as misguided people, he said:"They go to Afghanistan to learn about how to make bombs and kill people. What is the justification for that in Malaysia...?"

Dr Mahathir said there was no cause to commit acts of terror in Malaysia as the government could be thrown out through the ballot box.

He said those resorting to terrorism to topple the government or realise their plans were "either naive or plain stupid" or those who felt that they could not win in a fair election and as such, impose their rule through acts of violence.

There had also been a lot of misinterpretations about Islam by people wanting to rise to power, he said.

Asked whether resistance movements could be considered as perpetrating terrorism, Dr Mahathir said in some cases violence was justified if the state oppressed the people.

Since there was no way for the people to revoke the oppression they might have to resort to violence, he said.

"But we must have some limitation to what kind of violence is used. If you tied a bomb to your body and go into a supermarket and explode yourself, killing innocent people then it is an act of terror.

"Even if you are doing in order to overthrow a very oppressive government, we cannot accept that. If you hijack an aircraft and put people in great danger and to violent death as happened on Sept 11, that is an act of terror.

"You may be fighting for Palestine, you may be fighting for which ever country but it is not acceptable. If you do that you must be outlawed by the whole world...we cannot accept such act," Dr Mahathir said.

Dr Mahathir said all nations must cooperate to fight terrorism and list out acts of terror which would justify condemnation of these people as terrorists not only by the victims' country but by the whole world.

On the so-called war against terror in Afghanistan, Dr Mahathir said that despite assertions that the war against the terrorists was not a war against Islam, it was undeniable that only Muslim terrorists were being targeted now.

"We hate to say it, but it is beginning to look more and more like a war against Muslims," Dr Mahathir said.

He said attacking Afghanistan was not going to result in the killing or capture of terrorists.

"Wiping out the Afghans, reducing their country to dust will not wipe out the terrorists. Some may be killed but many others living outside Afghanistan or who have slipped out of Afghanistan would escape unscathed.

"They are not likely to be deterred by the killing of the Afghans or the destruction of the country," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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