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Dr M awaits reply from Blair on proposal

PUTRAJAYA, Tues. - Malaysia is pushing for an international conference on terrorism to devise a long-term solution by looking into and solving the root causes.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he wrote to his British counterpart Tony Blair recently about this, and was awaiting a reply.

He added that Malaysia wanted an international conference which would define the concept of terrorists and decide on global action.

"It should also include State-sponsored terrorism," he said at a Press conference at his office today.

Dr Mahathir said he wrote to Blair when he cancelled his trip to Britain on Sept 11, following the terrorist attacks on the United States. Blair had replied, asking for Malaysia's support for action to hunt down the terrorists.

The Prime Minister said he wrote back to Blair, saying that Malaysia was against terrorism but wanted an indepth look into the causes of terrorism and early preventive action. For instance, he said Malaysia had wanted an observer team to be sent to Palestine to prevent violence but was opposed by Israel and the US.

Dr Mahathir added that Malaysia might make a formal recommendation to the United Nations for a conference, but believed that this might not be an appropriate time as the focus was now on hunting down the terrorists.

He also said terrorism cannot be effectively fought by military means because the enemy was invisible, and a militant reaction would only lead to a prolonged struggle.

He said Malaysia supported the US efforts to hunt down the terrorists and was willing to furnish any information it had, but will not surrender its nationals to any foreign nation.

He said if Malaysians were involved, then the country had its own laws. They could be held under the Internal Security Act or charged in court if they had committed crimes which could be proven, like robbery and murder. Foreigners, he said, could be extradited if Malaysia had an extradition agreement with the requesting country.

Dr Mahathir said there was no proof terrorists kept funds in Malaysia to finance their activities.

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