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Mahathir-Afghanistan

MALAYSIA AGAINST ATTACK ON AFGHANISTAN, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 28 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said that while Malaysia supports the United States' war against terrorism, it opposes plans to attack Afghanistan or other nations in the US' pursuit of terrorists.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia believed that going to battle would not solve terrorism as war would also inflict on the innocent public.

"We do not wish to see any war being launched at any country.

"We have to object to any intended war as we do not see it as a solution," Dr Mahathir said at a media conference after chairing an Umno Supreme Council meeting at the party headquarters here today.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia called for an international conference on terrorism to determine the causes of the problem and formulate measures to deal with it.

He said figuring out the reasons for the terrorists' anger would be crucial in containing and defusing their fury.

While referring to the Sept 11 terrorist attacks on New York's World Trade Centre and the Pentagon in Washington, Dr Mahathir said there was obviously extreme fury that provoked the terrorists to make suicidal flights to bring down buildings.

"Otherwise they would have not done what they did and we should find why were they so angry," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia will notify its high commissioners and ambassadors abroad on its stand so that there would be no contradiction on the matter.

The prime minister said Malaysia has no ties with the Taliban rulers of Afghanistan and the Afgan envoy in Malaysia is representing the Northern Alliance.

Malaysia too, he said, has evidence that some Malaysians had teamed up with the Talibans and returned home to mount terror activities to topple the government under the guise of setting up an Islamic state.

"As such we are also uneasy with the Talibans as well as Osama bin Laden," Dr Mahathir said.

He said that in the event that Afghanistan is attacked in the pursuit of terrorists, many innocent Afghans would inevitably fall victims.

"Although the Talibans rule Afghanistan, they may not enjoy the support of the Afghan people at large who had no choice but to remain in that country and follow the ways dictated by the Talibans," Dr Mahathir said.

He hoped that the United Nations would organise the world conference on terrorism which Malaysia proposed and involve all countries at that.

However, given the lengthy process entailed in convening such a conference, it would do to first have several western and Islamic nations to attend a smaller meeting to discuss terrorism with utmost urgency, he said.

Dr Mahathir believed terrorism would persist even if Afghanistan would subsequently be captured or annexed by the west.

Not all Afghans, Iraqis or Palestinians are terrorists as intelligence reports also showed that they also consisted of Saudi and Egyptians, he said.

"As such it is improper to blame the Afghan government or the Saudi government because terrorists are everywhere. They could have already been in the US for a quite a while preparing and planning for the recent

attacks," Dr Mahathir said.

"Even if Afghanistan is defeated and occupied by the western powers, this does not guarantee terrorism is defused, perhaps the terrorists may strike again elsewhere," he said.

Dr Mahathir also disclosed that his British counterpart Tony Blair had replied his letter in which Dr Mahathir proposed an observer mission be deployed to restrain the Israelis and the Palestinians.

However Dr Mahathir said Blair did not respond to the proposal saying he would do so later and instead Blair raised other issues relating to Myanmar.

Dr Mahathir said he would also reply Blair's letter.

Meanwhile, the Deputy Prime Minister and Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi who had just returned from a four-day visit to Saudi Arabia also attended today's supreme council meeting.

Also speaking at the media conference Abdullah said the Saudi government expressed support for the Malaysia-initiated international conference on terrorism and that Riyadh opposed all forms of terrorism.

Today's Umno Supreme Council meeting discussed Malaysia's stand on the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington and the US retaliatory response.

-- BERNAMA

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