

25 SEP 2001

Mahathir-Blair

PM WRITES TO BLAIR AFFIRMING STAND AGAINST TERRORISM

PUTRAJAYA, Sept 25 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has written a letter to British Prime Minister Tony Blair calling for international efforts to fight terrorism, including state-sanctioned violence.

In the letter, which was sent recently, the Prime Minister said an international conference should be convened to work out measures to check terrorism, including what is happening in Palestine, Iraq and Sudan.

"I have not received any reply from the British Prime Minister as he may be busy.

"But our stand is that there should be an international conference on terrorism where we can define what terrorism is, and what action should be taken. Such terrorism should include state terrorism, where terrorism is actually sanctioned by state," he told a news conference at his office here today.

Dr Mahathir said he had earlier written another letter to Blair following his decision to cancel his visit to the United Kingdom on Sept 12. The visit was called off at the last minute after the Sept 11 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington.

In his reply, Blair, among other things, touched on the devastating suicide attacks on the US and asked Malaysia to support actions to hunt down the terrorists.

"I have replied saying that I agree with the action to hunt down the terrorists, but at the same time attention should be given to the reasons why the violent acts occurred.

"Early action should be taken, especially in Palestine...Malaysia has asked that as a first step, even before this we have asked, an observer force be sent to Palestine, and this has been opposed by Israel and the United States," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was of the view that if such an action was taken it would be easier to ensure that there would be no violence in Palestine, regardless of whether it was committed by Palestinians or Israelis.

Dr Mahathir was asked who would take the initiative to hold the conference on terrorism and whether Malaysia would make a proposal to the United Nations (UN).

To this, Dr Mahathir said: "We may make a formal proposal to the UN but since the focus now seems to be on hunting down the terrorists, the time may not be so suitable. However, I have mentioned this matter to anyone I met and talked to, including Americans."

-- BERNAMA
AFY KHY YBY