

# PM: Identify causes of bitterness

Nst - 2 APR 2002

## 'Address grievances in order to end terrorism'

By Farush Khan  
*farush@nstp.com.my*

SERI KEMBANGAN, Mon. -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today presented his formula to end new acts of terrorism: identify and attend to the causes of the bitterness and anger afflicting some countries and their people, and eliminate them.

"While we should identify terrorists everywhere and act in whatever way prescribed, we must also find ways and means to prevent the tendency of certain people or governments to resort to terrorism," the Prime Minister said.

Speaking at the Special Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers on Terrorism, Dr Mahathir said: "We must identify the causes of their bitterness and anger and remove these causes.

"I don't think people would want to blast themselves to death simply because they enjoy doing so. These are acts of the desperate, acts of people who see no way to redress their grievances, to alleviate their sufferings.

"We cannot just dismiss them as senseless perverts who enjoy terrorising people

their territory through conventional war with the help of friendly states failed and they lost more land."

He suggested that armed attacks or other forms of attack against civilians must be regarded as acts of terror and the perpetrators regarded as terrorists.

Whether the attackers were acting on their own or on the orders of their governments, whether they were regulars or irregulars, if the attack was against civilians, then they must be considered as terrorists.

Groups or governments which support attacks on civilians, he said, must be regarded as terrorists, irrespective of the justification of the operations carried out and the nobility of the struggle.

However, if civilians were acci-

- 
- FULL TEXT OF SPEECH: P8, 10
  - SEE EDITORIAL ON P8
- 

dentally caught in the crossfire, the attackers should not be labelled as terrorists.

He said fighting terrorists was not like fighting another country.

"If we want to stop new acts of terrorism, we will have to attend to the causes of the bitterness and anger and try to eliminate them. We must seriously try to do this."

The three-day special session, attended by 52 of the 57 OIC member countries, is being convened as the Muslim world's response to terrorism, following the Sept 11 attacks in the United States and the deteriorating situation in West Asia.

The meeting is expected to come up with the Kuala Lumpur Declaration, outlining, among others, the definition, root causes and measures to stem terrorism.

Dr Mahathir said for the Muslims, the grievances from aggressions were "real and truly unbearable", beyond mere understanding and tolerance.

"For the past five decades the Palestinians, for example, have not only had their lands confiscated, but they had also been expelled from their own land by the Israelis.

"Their puny attempts to regain

"We can flatten the enemy country until nothing is left of that country. It is entirely possible to do that now and it has been done, but we can still miss the terrorists, for we do not know who they are and where they are."

He said it was also important for the world community to come up with an international agreement to constitute what was terrorism so that they could co-operate and participate in whatever action to be taken against the perpetrators.

"Here there is no authority more competent than the United Nations to make these decisions. Once the UN has decided, the whole world must co-operate fully in the fight against the terrorists concerned."

Dr Mahathir said discriminating against people who were ethnically or religiously similar to the terrorists only angered more people and perhaps contributed to the breeding of new terrorists.

"We already know that it is

□ TURN TO PAGE 2, COL 1

# Dr M shares anti-terror Nst - 2. APR 2002 experience

□ FROM PAGE ONE

entirely possible for freedom fighters struggling against oppression to be mistaken for and to be deliberately labelled as terrorists by their oppressors."

Telling the delegates of Malaysia's experience in combating terrorism, Dr Mahathir said from 1948 to 1990 "we fought against them, we hunted them and we punished them. But we also looked into the causes of their insurrection."

"We found that they were mainly Chinese who felt alienated because they had not been given citizenship by the British. Their insurrection was supported by the majority of ordinary Chinese who sympathised with them and who also felt just as alienated."

Accordingly, he said, the independent Malaysian Government gave more than a million citizenships to the Chinese, protected them, provided land for them, enabled them to go about their business, and gave them a meaningful participation in the government of the country.

"This was what the Malaysian Government refers to as winning the hearts and minds of the people. And the Chinese were won over.

"They slowly ceased helping the terrorists, stopped the recruitment of new members and actually helped to apprehend many more."

fight against terrorism. But we know now that no country is safe, no one is safe.

We recognise now that terrorism is a crime, a heinous crime against humanity as a whole.

It is a crime against the whole world no matter who or what or which country has been or is being targeted. The attack on Sept 11 we know, affects the whole world and damages not just buildings in a particular country and the people in them but it has struck at the very foundation of the world's economy and it has resulted in death and destruction for the country and people believed to be the base of the attacks.

It has shattered the confidence of the world and has left an atmosphere of fear. The fallout from that terror attack is not over yet.

Others will suffer, will lose their freedom, their rights and will lose their lives too. They will have to flee from

checks, ever more inconvenience. And yet we still feel fear, for despite the checks the aircraft could still be used as guided missiles even.

We will be more strict now, but we can never really be certain that the aircraft we are travelling in would not be exposed to newer acts of terror.

We fly despite the inconvenience of security checks but we fly in fear.

Millions of us need to travel and whether we are in the air or on the ground we will always be exposed to terrorist attacks, to kidnapping, being held to ransom and killed even.

The world is inventing more and more new weapons for conventional war. Every country prepares for a frontal attack.

And so the weapons race goes on, bleeding the nations involved, bleeding other nations as they are forced to acquire these weapons which they will never use for decades.

---

**In the liberal Western countries there are quite a few terrorists cells working in support of terrorist organisations . . . They are not too different from Afghanistan which provided a haven for al-Qaeda.**

---

their countries and live in misery in sub-human conditions.

Even the richest and most powerful countries, far removed from the scene of terror attacks will pay the price in other ways.

Perhaps the Sept 11 attacks are unusual in the extent of the fallout. But terrorist attacks in the past have also had an effect on the world.

We may not have realised it but actually for years now we have been living in fear. That is why we accept the security measures taken by every country.

We know that even the innocent among us may be gunned down, or kidnapped and killed.

There was a time when air travel was so safe that nobody checked our luggage. Then came the first hijacking.

Since then we have to undergo ever more stringent

But all the while there will be some people, misguided perhaps, who watch the development of these weapons.

These are the people who plan to make terrorist attacks. And there will be any number of greedy people willing to procure and sell the latest weaponry to the would-be terrorists.

Today it is entirely possible for terrorists to acquire the weapons of mass destruction. A small vial of deadly bacteria, or virus is not too difficult to come by.

Indeed it is possible now to acquire nuclear weapons even. Whether the world is aware of it or not we are being held to ransom.

We pay a high price for protection but some day, despite all our precautions, our security arrangements, we may see these weapons being employed not by security forces but by terror groups or individuals.

And all this while the cost of defence against terrorism will mount inexorably, both in terms of money and our convenience and our lifestyle.

We must all fight against terrorists and terrorism for none of us are really safe. But we cannot fight an enemy we cannot identify.

Fighting terrorists is not like fighting another country. We can flatten the enemy country until nothing is left of that country.

It is entirely possible to do that now, and it has been done. But we can still miss the terrorists, for we do not know who they are and where they are.

They may not be in the country we have destroyed. They may be elsewhere; they may even be in our own country.

Today people are mobile and there is no country that is ethnically pure.

Migration takes place as travel becomes more easy and almost every country will become ever more multiracial, multireligious and multi-ethnic.

Swearing allegiance guarantees nothing. There will always be aliens among us. We cannot keep track of all the aliens in all the countries.

In fact we can never be certain that our own people might not, be terrorists, or potential terrorists.

We cannot hunt down terrorists until we all agree who they are and we co-operate in the hunt.

We have a need to agree on the way to identify the terrorist, to agree on what constitutes an act of terror.

Discriminating against people who are ethnically or religiously similar to the terrorists' only angers more people and perhaps contributes to the breeding of new terrorists. It is counter productive.

We already know that it is entirely possible for freedom fighters struggling against oppression to be mistaken for and to be deliberately labelled as terrorists by their oppressors.

Thus Jomo Kenyatta, Robert Mugabe, Nelson Mandela, Sam Nujoma were all labelled as terrorists, were hunted and faced jail sentences if they were

# against blight of blind anger'

These people may be misguided. They may be wrong in believing they are fighting a *jihad*, a holy war.

They may achieve nothing to put an end to their grievances. Indeed they may actually be doing a lot of harm to their cause, to their co-religionists, to Islam itself.

But the fact remains that they are very angry and bitter and willing to commit terrible acts of terror, even if they lose their lives in the process.

The world must deal with these misguided people not just by hunt-

ing them down but also by removing the causes of their anger and frustration.

In Malaysia we had to deal with terrorists for 42 long years - from 1948 to 1990. We fought against them, we hunted them and we punished them.

But we also looked into the causes of their insurrection. We found that they were mainly Chinese who felt alienated because they had not been given citizenship status by the British.

Their insurrection was supported by the majority of ordinary Chinese who sympathised with them and who also felt just as alienated.

Accordingly the independent Malaysian Government gave more than a million citizenships to the Chinese, protected them, provided land for them, enabled them to go about their business, and gave them a meaningful participation in the government of the country.

This was what the Malaysian Government refers to as winning the hearts and minds of the people. And the Chinese were won over.

They slowly ceased helping the terrorists, stopped the recruitment

of new members and they actually helped the Government apprehend many of them.

What the Government did may sound like appeasement. It may encourage people to resort to terrorism in order to achieve their objectives.

But by removing their grievances and the causes of their violent anger, they had to admit that their struggle had become meaningless.

Eventually they laid down arms. Today Malaysians of Chinese origin are peace-loving and loyal to the country.

to acts of terror.

We must point out that Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Jews and others are equally guilty of terrorism. Terrorists must be identified by their acts, and nothing else.

And we as responsible Muslims must contribute to the fight against terrorism by helping to define what constitutes terrorism and who are the terrorists.

And when that is done we can all join in the fight against the terrorists, be they Muslims, or Christians, or Hindus, or Jews.

The Sept 11 attack on New York

---

**Killing their leader is not going to help either. More violent leaders will replace the fallen leader and the terror attacks will go on. The Holocaust did not defeat the Jews. A second Holocaust with Arabs for victims will not defeat the Arabs either. Israelis must come to their senses and opt for de-escalation of terror rather than escalating it.**

---

ing them down but also by removing the causes of their anger and frustration.

In Malaysia we had to deal with terrorists for 42 long years - from 1948 to 1990. We fought against them, we hunted them and we punished them.

But we also looked into the causes of their insurrection. We found that they were mainly Chinese who felt alienated because they had not been given citizenship status by the British.

Their insurrection was supported by the majority of ordinary Chinese who sympathised with them and who also felt just as alienated.

Accordingly the independent Malaysian Government gave more than a million citizenships to the Chinese, protected them, provided land for them, enabled them to go about their business, and gave them a meaningful participation in the government of the country.

This was what the Malaysian Government refers to as winning the hearts and minds of the people. And the Chinese were won over.

They slowly ceased helping the terrorists, stopped the recruitment

If Malaysia's experience is anything to go by, in the fight against terrorism worldwide, the causes, the grievances of the terrorists must be attended to.

We must win the hearts and minds of the people most likely to support or resort to terrorism.

The extreme disparity between rich and poor and poverty must be reduced, the rigid insistence that everyone must accept the same ideology and set of values must be relaxed and in the case of the Muslims, the oppression of the Palestinians and the other Muslims and their countries must be brought to an end.

But Muslims everywhere must condemn terrorism once it is clearly defined. Terrorising people is not the way of Islam.

Certainly killing innocent people is not Islamic. Flitter and angry though we may be we must demonstrate to the world that Muslims are rational people when fighting for our rights and we do not resort to acts of terror.

We must object strongly to the linking of Muslims with terror just because a few Muslims have resorted

and Washington is an unmitigated disaster for Muslims all over the world.

Our image, which had not been good, has been made worse. It does not help that we are all weak and disunited.

If the present crises in the Muslim world are to be overcome we have to be serious about handling it.

You are here I believe because you recognise the danger facing us.

Unless we are able to turn the present worldwide anger over the terrorist attack of Sept 11 into a real campaign against all terrorists irrespective of their religious faiths, we are going to find that Muslim bashing will be heightened and our struggle to alleviate the sufferings of hundreds of millions of oppressed Muslims will fail.

We have a duty here to the Muslim *ummah*, to Islam and to Allah s.w.t.

Let us put aside other considerations and strive for consensus in our fight against the blight of blind anger and frustration and prove that Islam is indeed a way of life that will bring about well-being and glory to the Muslims and to mankind as a whole.