

PM: Muslims' anger growing

DALILAH IBRAHIM
and IZATUN SHARI

Double standards causing problems

KUALA LUMPUR: The anger of Muslims in the wake of the Israeli siege in Palestine is greater than it was in the aftermath of last September's aerial attacks on the United States, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

And, the Prime Minister warned, if the Middle East crisis was left unresolved it could lead to more terrorist acts.

"That is my belief. Today, the anger of the Muslims is greater than after the Sept 11 attacks on the US.

"Most Muslim countries would like to co-operate (with other nations) in the fight against terrorism.

"But because of discrimination against them - in terms of interpretation of terrorism - Muslims today are angrier than before," he said after delivering a keynote address at the Seventh Conference of Ministers of Endowments and Islamic Affairs here yesterday.

Dr Mahathir regretted that

terrorist acts by Israel against Palestine were not condemned while the Palestinians (who were under a month-long siege which saw their leader Yasser Arafat entrapped in his West Bank base in Ramallah) were condemned by the world.

"This is grossly unfair," he said, adding that the Israelis took advantage of world opinion on terrorism to attack the Palestinians whom they accused of being terrorists.

Dr Mahathir said "state terrorism", being sanctioned by a legitimate government, was worse than terrorism carried out by individuals.

"The acts of terrorism carried out by the Palestinians are not sanctioned by their government.

"In fact, the Palestinian government is prevented from having any control over its people who then take the law into their own hands," he said.

Dr Mahathir reiterated that while he criticised suicide

bombers, he pointed out that the Palestinians had no choice as nobody was helping them.

"I don't condone it but I have accepted that they are desperate," he said, adding that he would forward a proposal to the government to provide either financial or humanitarian aid to the Palestinians.

Asked to comment on the meeting between Israeli leader Ariel Sharon and US President George W. Bush, Dr Mahathir said, "That is 'his right. I am not disputing his right but we also have our right to say something."

On comments he made in his keynote address that the Organisation of Islamic Conference had not been effective because its members were not united, Dr Mahathir said OIC needed to find more effective ways to perform than just issuing statements.

Earlier, in his strongly worded address, the Prime Minister said he was ashamed

that many people, both Muslims and non-Muslims, had made fun of the OIC saying that it stands for "Oh! I see".

"The implication is that we just see and do nothing. Since its founding, the OIC has not been remarkable for the things that it does.

"Muslims and Muslim countries could not even regard each other as brothers. While the enemy is at the door we are busy trying to bring down governments and weakening ourselves in the process," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Muslims themselves were at fault for the sad state of affairs they were in now and should not point fingers or blame Islam for their fate.

"Remember that the sad plight of the Muslims of today is our own doing, due to our not really practising Islam," he said.

"It is basically because they ignore the true teachings of

Islam, the injunctions of the Quran and the guidance of true *Hadis*. They quote the Quran often enough but only to explain away their wrong deeds," he said.

Dr Mahathir reminded Muslims of the importance of knowledge and skills, saying the acquisition of knowledge that contributed to the well being of the *ummah* was a primary obligation.

He said the quest for knowledge was the first step towards the fulfilment of the Muslim injunction to be charitable, and to endow the wealth earned for the well being of the Muslims and their need for institutions and facilities to perform their ritual and non-ritual obligations as Muslims.

"With skills we can enrich ourselves and enrich our society. We can produce things and invent things, trade and manufacture," he said, reminding them that they had been craftsmen and thinkers but for a long time had stopped improving their production and their thinking.