

World not doing enough, says Mahathir

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WASHINGTON: The world is not doing enough to defuse the anger and address the causes of serious grievances faced by Muslims, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said last night.

He said the fight against Muslim terrorists would therefore take longer.

"Fighting against terrorists is not like fighting against a country. Terrorists do not operate from within a country, they are everywhere," he said at a dinner organised by the US-Asean Business Council here.

The Prime Minister said that while their counter-productive acts must never be excused "we must try to defuse their anger and causes for it."

"I'm afraid the world is not doing enough. Our view is that we must remove the causes of their bitterness and anger also," he added.

He said Muslims had serious grievances. The Palestinians in the occupied territories were subjected to oppression and humiliation. Israeli troops attacked and killed Palestinian civilians, including women and children who had nothing to do with the suicide bombers.

Elsewhere Muslim countries were subjected to attacks and economic sanctions, resulting in many deaths from deprivation of all kinds.

"Because of all this there is a great deal of bitterness and anger among Muslims."

Dr Mahathir said that

Islam in its true sense was a religion of peace, tolerance and respect for human life and all its variations.

When it was properly understood and the true precepts followed, it offered a path to enlightenment, to harmony, to stable and responsible government, to progress and prosperity.

"Malaysia is an Islamic state and at the same time and without contradiction, it is democratic, diverse, tolerant, peaceful, economically and politically stable, progressive and forward looking," he said.

"Let me be perfectly clear

about one thing. Malaysia has no tolerance for terrorists, whether people are fighting for what they consider a noble cause or not, there are certain acts which they may not perpetrate.

"Exploding bombs in public places and killing innocent civilians cannot be accepted. Holding people to ransom or as shields cannot be accepted.

"Poisoning food, medicine or water supply cannot be accepted. Deliberate killing of civilians even when sanctioned by legitimate governments is equally unacceptable."

He said these were acts of terror and anyone committing them must be regarded as a terrorist.

He added that Malaysia was willing to support countries within Asean, the international community and the US in the fight against terrorism.

President George W. Bush, he added, had acknowledged Malaysia's support in the fight against terrorism.

"He expressed these sentiments in both our face-to-face meetings in Shanghai last October and again today (yesterday) at the White House."