

PM: War on Iraq will create new terror

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US invasion will spark fresh inflow of recruits

MUSCAT: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad warned yesterday that if the United States invades Iraq it would create a flow of fresh terrorist recruits.

Muslims have been branded by the West as potential terrorists, and penalised and humiliated when they travelled abroad in the wake of Sept 11, Mahathir said in a front-page interview with the *Times of Oman*.

"There is an imperative need for greater efforts by the international Muslim community to see a peaceful resolution to all conflicts, including security tensions," he told the Muscat daily.

"The real dilemma is nothing but a clash of civilisations, especially between the West and Islam", he said in the interview from Kuala Lumpur.

The prime minister questioned

why the West did not seek to unearth the real causes of terrorism and eliminate them, deploring that many intellectual voices have been ignored on the subject.

"Forcing Western political agendas and values on other cultures is not desirable. The arrogance of power must be eliminated. The use of force should never be considered as a solution to avert terrorism," he said.

Mahathir was pessimistic on the future of the Palestinians, noting that US supports Israel despite its illegal occupation of Palestinian territories.

"Unless the root causes are realistically addressed, I do not foresee any changes in the Middle East in the immediate future," he reiterated.

Mahathir called on the Muslim world to do more.

"As the world faces mounting challenges, the international Muslim community should come forward to help promote stability and enhance the sharing of prosperity," he said.

"We would like to benefit from the process of globalisation and liberalisation.

"Muslim countries should move closer and initiate integration of their economies, and solve political and economic problems to spur growth," the prime minister added.

"We would like to trade more, open up markets and enjoy higher income, and increase welfare that globalisation is supposed to deliver," he stressed.

The prime minister has sided with the West in the campaign against terrorism, although he frequently criticised their conduct. - AFP