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Howard a white supremacist, says Dr M

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today described Australian Prime Minister John Howard as a white supremacist for his recent statements linking terrorism with Asian countries.

The Prime Minister said he agreed with members of the Opposition Labor Party who had so described Howard.

"Yes, I think he is something of a white supremacist. It is an old-fashioned idea but he thinks that whites are superior to coloured people. So since we are brown people, we must be stupid," he said after launching the joint conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists and World Fellowship of Buddhist Youths in Shah Alam.

He was asked to comment on disapproval in Australia of Howard's recent statement that his country may carry out pre-emptive strikes against Asian nations where terrorists intending to attack possible targets in Australia may be operating.

International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz said Malaysia did not need alarm bells or wake-up calls from other countries.

Malaysia had been taking action against terrorists, including political extremists, for a long time.

"We are the ones who rang the alarm bell but they felt that we wanted to suppress the opposition," Rafidah said after the Wanita Umno Hari Raya open house.

"Malaysia has dealt well in handling terrorists thus far."

In Sungai Petani, Deputy Information Minister Datuk Zainuddin Maidin said some Asian countries were like "bananas" for keeping quiet over Howard's statements.

(`Banana' describes a non-white person who believes that he is white.)

He said the silence from these countries showed their true feelings.

"We now know which Asian countries feel they belong here and who are Asian through and through, and who are merely `bananas'," he said at his open house in Bedong yesterday.

"Countries like Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines showed their displeasure at the insult.

"I don't have to tell who (the Asian countries) are but the word `banana' describes them accurately."