

02/08/2002

Strategy to combat terrorism lacking

reports on "Global 2002 - International Smart Partnership Dialogue" by PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad last night expressed fear that efforts are not being made to carve out a strategy to combat terrorists as countries become too preoccupied in waging war against them, an effort in futility and wasteful.

"Some think that all that is needed is to declare war on terrorism and to mount a full military operation. Like fighting conventional war, they see the terrorists being defeated and laying down their arms.

"Unfortunately, fighting terrorists is not like fighting a conventional or a civil war. In a conventional war, the enemy is a country or an alliance of countries or a definable group."

He said this at the welcome banquet for some 400 participants of the The Global 2002 International Smart Partnership Dialogue, which incorporates the Langkawi International Dialogue, the Southern Africa International Dialogue and for the first time this year, the East Africa International Dialogue.

Dr Mahathir said with terrorism, there was no country which could truly be identified as the enemy, as the terrorists might be hiding anywhere, or even among the people of the country which was fighting against terrorism.

"Many of the terrorists may be killed or arrested, but there is no guarantee there will be no more around or new recruits being deterred.

"And when the terrorists are prepared to kill themselves in carrying out their acts of terror, there is no way we can prevent them from doing that with any certainty."

Dr Mahathir said that to fight terrorism there must be a strategy which took into consideration its causes.

"We must eliminate the causes even if they are silly and unreasonable if we want to win the hearts and minds of supporters and sympathisers and to prevail upon would-be terrorists to cease and desist.

"I am afraid this is not being done. In fact, the opposite is happening as terror attacks, which are totally indiscriminate, are being used to counter terrorism which have caused even more anger and desperation and more willingness on the part of the terrorists to reply in kind," he said.

The Prime Minister also spoke about democracy, saying that although it was the best system devised by Man, it did not always work, especially for the less developed nations.

"People must be sophisticated and must know the limits if democracy is not to end up in anarchy."