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Mahathir-Terrorism

TERRORISM ISSUE NOT HANDLED PROPERLY, SAYS DR M

By: Ahmad Zukiman Zain

HYDERABAD, Oct 17 (Bernama) -- The terrorism problem affecting the world is not being handled properly with the situation now "worse than immediately after Sept 11," Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said too much emphasis was being given to security and defence, and not enough attention was paid to the causes of terrorism.

"You cannot fight terrorism that way because we do not know where they are going to strike," he told a media conference at the end of his first visit here on the way to New Delhi, and later to Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

He said: "In a conventional war, you can attack the country, defeat the country and the war is over.

"But in fighting terrorists, they don't belong to any particular country, you don't know where they are going to strike, you don't know where they are," he said.

Dr Mahathir said: "Unless you find out why they are doing these things and eliminate the reasons, we are not going to make any progress."

"So my view is that, the situation today is worse than immediately after Sept 11," he said when asked about the issue in the light of the terrorist-linked bombings in the Indonesian resort island of Bali.

Asked if Malaysia could pressure countries like the United States seen to be practising double standards in dealing with the problem, Dr Mahathir said, being a small country, Malaysia was not in a position to apply pressure on anyone.

"But, we do express our views on things, if we think that people are practising double standards, we just say so," he said.

He said: "Whether people listen to us or not, it's a different matter but we feel we have to give our comments based on the truth."

On US' stand to use force against Iraq, Dr Mahathir said, any attack on Iraq was not going to be productive.

"It is merely going to increase animosity between Muslims and Europeans and the Americans. So, it is not going to contribute towards the fight against terrorism," he said.

US President George W. Bush yesterday signed into law a resolution authorising the use of force in its attempt to dislodge Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

In a just-ended Presidential Referendum, Iraqis have given a solid mandate to Saddam, whom Washington accused of producing weapons of mass destruction, to continue leading the Gulf State for another seven years.

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