

# Islam's image under sieve, says sec-gen

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MUSLIM countries should try the remedies suggested by Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to face a new world order where Islam and its values have become objects of discredit and antagonism.

OIC secretary-general Abdelouahed Belkeziz said there were attempts to create a "new Islamic reality" by people who did not know the religion.

"We are all witnesses to the smear campaigns directed at major Islamic hallmarks, which have also come under the threat of political containment, sanctions, marginalisation, isolation and military occupation," he said in his address at the opening of the OIC summit here.

"Neither this painful reality nor the state of helplessness, frustration and weaknesses has sprung out of a vacuum. They



are due to both external and internal forces," he said.

He said Muslim countries had focused too much on internal issues and disputes among themselves, and should have instead - like Europe - thought of ways to restore unity.

Belkeziz said the Islamic

world should not provide reasons for others to attack its sovereignty, and should instead refute accusations of terrorism.

"Some major media depicted any act of violence by Muslim individuals as Islamic terrorism.

"Unfortunately, the word 'Islam' has become associated with terrorism in most minds the world over," he said.

Belkeziz said the OIC was the first to draw the attention of terrorism, long before international concern over the issue.

"We also took legal measures and practical steps regarding the fight against terrorism and launched a campaign to drum up international support for, and rally behind, international efforts to counter terrorism," he said.

He added that despite these efforts Islam and Muslims were still associated with terrorism

and were victims of smear campaigns and blatant discrimination.

Qatari Emir Shaikh Hamad Khalifa Al-Thani, the past chairman of the OIC, warned that Muslims have become targets now more than before.

The ruler said the Muslim *ummah* (community) was being threatened in its creed, culture, social and political orientation.

He urged OIC leaders to exert greater effort to show the world the true essence and image of Islam, which practises justice, tolerance and equality.

He also conceded that during his country's chairmanship of the organisation, the OIC had not managed to realise all it had set out to do.

This failure had been mainly due to member countries and the *ummah* not being united, Shaikh Hamad said.