

Mahathir: West unfair to Arafat

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PETALING JAYA: Western nations are not interested in resolving the Palestinian issue, said former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He said the Western media had labelled Yasser Arafat a murderer although the late Palestinian leader had acted as he did because of the need to protect himself.

On the other hand, he noted, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon had deliberately killed Palestinians.

"But Sharon is not being called a murderer. So this shows how the Western countries are very unfair to Arafat and his cause.

"And they do not really want to see a solution to the Palestinian issue," he said.

Dr Mahathir added that Arafat had continued to pursue his

cause even in trying conditions.

"He was really dedicated to the cause but there were those, like CNN, who had falsely accused him of being a murderer on the day he died," he said yesterday after signing the condolence book at the Palestinian Embassy.

Dr Mahathir and his wife, Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, were met by the embassy's counsellor, Dr Azmi Al Daqqa.

Dr Mahathir also warned that terrorism would continue as long as the Palestinian issue was not resolved.

Asked whether Arafat's death signalled a change in the peace process, he said:

"There will be an interregnum for some time because things will have to be sorted out, but I doubt the new leadership will adopt a different stand because

they are all united."

"They might sound more conciliatory but the objective remains the same, which is regaining the land belonging to the Palestinians and the return of the refugees," he said.

On Arafat's successor, he said the Palestinians needed to choose someone of the same calibre as Arafat, who believed in the struggle and not self-interest.

Dr Mahathir also said he did not see a bright future for the Palestinians.

"The Western world is not that sympathetic and the Muslim world is divided. So it is difficult to resolve the matter," he said.

Meanwhile, Dr Azmi said the public could still visit the embassy and sign the condolence book on Wednesday and Thursday from 10am to 4pm.