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Cabinet, people strongly back Dr M's speech

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - The Cabinet and Malaysians have taken a strong stand to support Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's opening speech at the recently concluded 10th Organisation of Islamic Conference Summit in Putrajaya.

Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said although there were some quarters who have taken Dr Mahathir to task over his statement, Malaysians fully supported what the Prime Minister said as it was the truth.

"What the Prime Minister said is the reality ...no one has dared to come forward like Dr Mahathir to say anything, especially in addressing the Palestinian issue," he said.

Najib, who is also Umno vice-president, when met at the Parliament lobby, said if the Prime Minister's speech was studied, its contents were balanced and rational.

"The Prime Minister wants to prevent conflicts between Muslims and non-Muslims ...between Muslims and the Jews.

"Dr Mahathir said it is not proper for Muslims to use emotions and there is no point in using force. Muslims have to find ways using the right strategies and measures to address the matter," he said.

Najib said the Prime Minister even stressed how the Jews and Muslims had lived together in harmony in North Africa for generations, especially when the Jews were oppressed by Europeans.

"What Dr Mahathir wanted to express is the fact that the problem in the Middle East is not between the Muslims and Jews but the sole reason is that the rights of the Palestinians have been taken away.

"The Palestinians have been continuously oppressed by the Israelis," he said.

Najib said something had to be done failing which the conflict would continue.

"Whatever dissatisfaction expressed by United States President George W. Bush in reaction to the Prime Minister's statement has to be first looked into by him (Bush) at the source.

"The source of the problem is what Dr Mahathir said in his speech at the OIC Summit."

MCA president Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting, who is also Housing and Local Government Minister, said Dr Mahathir's intentions were good.