



CORDIAL TIES: Abdullah and Blair leaving the meeting room after a bilateral session yesterday. — Bernama picture

Probe terrorists' minds, says PM

Malaysia can help curb nuclear arms, says Blair

ON a day in which the United Nations could not reach a consensus on how to define terrorism, the Prime Minister pressed for greater effort to find out what makes those who spread terror tick.

"Terrorists deserve neither compassion nor sympathy. But we do need to know their minds and their mentality," said Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in an address to kings, presidents and prime ministers from 160 countries at the 60th United Nations assembly.

Each head of state or government is given five minutes to deliver a statement to the world body. Most of the speakers touched on four issues: fighting terrorism, poverty, nuclear proliferation and UN reform. It was clear that many were deeply divided on how to define terrorism.

Many speakers took the podium hours after the assembly agreed on a greatly watered-down document on what had once been an ambitious plan for countries to fight terrorism and halt the spread of nuclear weapons.

Abdullah, who is also the chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement and Organisation of the Islamic Conference, said only the

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UN could galvanise a global fight against terrorism. And before the battle can begin, everyone must know the motives of terrorists.

"These could be political injustice, the denial of human rights, a brutish life entrenched in pervasive poverty, or something else yet to be uncovered.

"We must take action to address the root causes so as to render their motivations irrelevant. It is possible to disrupt, capture and kill individual terrorists. However, unless the root causes are addressed and removed, new recruits will take the place of leaders and groups killed or destroyed in the fight against terrorism."

Abdullah also urged countries to draw a line and maintain a distinction between acts of terrorism and the rights of people fighting for self-determination.

"It is equally unjustifiable to associate terrorism with any particular race or religion. Terrorists

must be singled out only by their acts of terror and nothing else," said Abdullah, who has cautioned against Islamophobia.

He conceded that the document issued by the assembly reflected many degrees of compromises. This means that no one is fully satisfied. Certainly many issues remain unresolved. Quite clearly, therefore, we have much unfinished business on our hands in the months and years to come."

US President George W. Bush spoke of both chasing down terrorists and rooting out the causes of terrorism. He pressed the Security Council to approve a resolution calling upon all nations to take steps to end the incitement of terrorist acts. He also wanted countries to prosecute and extradite anyone selling material or the technology for nuclear devices.

A few hours later, the council called on member states to enact laws and stop anyone who wants to incite terror acts.

Britain's Tony Blair, Bush's closest ally, was less enthusiastic about focusing too much on what drives young men to become suicide bombers.

He said: "There are real injustices in our world, poverty, that is our duty to eradicate."

MALAYSIA can play a role in making sure that the spread of nuclear arms does not become a threat to the world, British Prime Minister Tony Blair believes.

He noted that as the chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, the country could influence certain nations from going down the dangerous path of nuclear proliferation.

He made this observation during a 30-minute bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi on the sidelines of the United Nations assembly here.

Blair appeared concerned about the situation in Iran.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said Malaysia believed that the best way to encourage Iran to comply was through peaceful negotiation.

During the meeting, both leaders also spoke about terrorism and the recent Malaysian Global Roadshow, which took Abdullah to London and New York.

Blair said he was pleased that Malaysia was trying to attract more British investors.

Islam Hadhari also featured during the discussions.

Britain has been interested to learn more about this approach for achieving a progressive Islamic civilisation that is compatible with modernity.