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Dr M panned over statement

Merdeka Centre: Claims on attack uncalled for

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PETALING JAYA: The statement by Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad that the Sept 11 attack was "staged" could not come at a worse time when the nation is facing its own issues, says the Merdeka Centre.

Its director Ibrahim Suffian said Dr Mahathir's statement did not help with the country's image at a time of religious tension.

He said Dr Mahathir should know the difference between the fiction of *Avatar* and the reality of the attack that happened nine years ago.

"Conspiracy theories aside, people actually died in that suicide attack. Dr Mahathir's statement is disrespectful to the victims for it to be described that way, with reference to a Hollywood movie," he said yesterday.

Ibrahim said that as the founder of the Perdana Global Peace Organisation, Dr Mahathir should know the root causes of terrorism and point out what led him to draw such conclusions.

DAP adviser Lim Kit Siang in a statement said that Dr Mahathir would have created "an international incident" between Malaysia and the United States if he was still the Prime Minister.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Assembly of Mosque Youth (Pernuda Masjid) *de facto* leader Dr Mohd Nawar Ariffin said more discussions

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IBRAHIM SUFFIAN

should take place on the allegations made.

"Dr Mahathir is a prominent figure who contributed a lot to the country. Although the statement incites controversy, perhaps it should be taken positively as an encouragement for people to dig out the truth. He is known as an evidence-based person when making statements," he said.

The statement also sparked a chain of reactions on the Internet with many blogging and tweeting on the issue.

On Wednesday, Dr Mahathir said there was strong evidence that the Sept 11 attacks on the United States that killed nearly 3,000 could have been "staged" as an excuse to mount attacks on the Muslim world.

"If they can make *Avatar*, they can make anything," Dr Mahathir was quoted as saying.

The United States Embassy declined to comment on the matter.