

Kashmir issue dominates Dr M-Modi talks in Russia

VLADIVOSTOK: The issue of Jammu and Kashmir dominated the bilateral meeting between Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi.

Foreign Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah said besides discussing bilateral relations during the Thursday meeting requested by Modi on the sidelines of the Eastern Economic Forum here, the Indian prime minister took time to clarify the position of Jammu and Kashmir.

Saifuddin said Dr Mahathir ex-

plained Malaysia's stand that all parties should meet and adhere to the United Nations' resolutions on the issue.

He said Dr Mahathir did not pledge support for any party, but hoped that the conflict would be settled and not escalate into a war.

Apart from complying with UN resolutions, he added, Dr Mahathir had opined that the best way to resolve the Kashmir dispute was through negotiation, bringing in a third party, or referring it to the

international court.

Tensions between Pakistan and India flared up last month following India's move to cancel the special status of both Jammu and Kashmir.

On the issue of Islamic preacher Dr Zakir Naik, Saifuddin said: "Zakir Naik was mentioned by Modi in passing and he (Modi) said the matter was being discussed by officers of both countries.

"That was how he (Modi) presented it. Dr Mahathir did not respond as most of the time was used

to discuss Kashmir."

Saifuddin clarified that there was no discussion between both foreign ministries at the moment, adding that only a diplomatic note was sent by India to seek the extradition of Zakir, who is a citizen of India with permanent resident status in Malaysia.

On Dr Mahathir's meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, he said the discussion covered cooperation in aerospace engineering research, sale of palm oil to

Russia and offer of military assets to Malaysia.

"Russia offered its latest fighter jets and was willing to take back our old jets, but it was not discussed in detail as the government has not made a decision on whether to buy or not," Saifuddin said.

In his meeting with Putin at the Asean Summit in Singapore last year, Dr Mahathir had sought Russia's assistance to maintain the fighter jets bought from the country. — Bernama