

# Dr M defends remarks on Kashmir

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## 'It's necessary to speak out on issues, even though it could be disliked by some'

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad stuck to his ground over his remarks on the Kashmir conflict amid escalating tension between Malaysia and India.

"We speak out our minds and we don't retract and change. We felt that the people of Kashmir had benefited from the resolution of the United Nations and all we are saying is that we should all abide, not just India and

Pakistan but even the United States of America and other countries.

"Otherwise, what's the good of having the UN?" the Prime Minister said.

On Sept 27, Dr Mahathir said that India and Pakistan should work together to resolve the conflict over Jammu and Kashmir in a speech presented at the UN General Assembly in New York.

Speaking to reporters at the Parliament lobby, Dr Mahathir acknowledged the strained diplomatic relations between Malaysia and India over his remarks.

He, however, pointed out that it was neces-

sary to speak out on issues, even though it could be disliked by some.

"Sometimes we have to have strained relationships but we want to be friendly with people. Malaysia is a trading nation, we need markets and so we are nice to people.

"But, also, we have to speak up for people. So, sometimes what we say is liked by some and disliked by others," he said.

It was reported that an Indian trade body representing oil seed crushers had advised its members not to buy palm oil from Malaysia, echoing New Delhi's protest against Dr Mahathir's remarks on the Kashmir conflict.

Dr Mahathir appeared unfazed over the calls made by the Indian trade body, saying the government had studied the effects of its boycott.

"This is not the Indian government, so we will have to find out how we can deal and communicate with these people because we are a trading nation and it's bad having what amounts to a trade war," he said.

Asked if Malaysia would be reporting India to the World Trade Organisation, Dr Mahathir answered: "At the moment, no."

Malaysia exported palm oil worth some US\$1.65bil (RM6.9bil) to India in 2018.