

'Incorporate values and philosophies of

Dr M: Redefine

By
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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called for a more broad-based definition of human rights to incorporate the values and philosophies of the whole human race.

He said unlike the existing definition which was formulated by Western nations after World War II when much of the world were their colonies, the redefinition must consider even suggestions from "the bunch of Asians".

"No one, no country, no people and no civilisation has a right to claim it has a monopoly of wisdom as to what constitute human rights," he said in his keynote address at the two-day JUST International Conference on Rethinking Human Rights at the Legend Hotel here.

The Prime Minister criticised the West for its hypocrisy on human rights and said certainly from the records and the performance of the Western liberals, they were least capable of defining and preaching human rights.

"Indeed, at the moment they have no right at all to talk of human rights, much less judge others on this issue.

"Developed countries can do with weak governments or no government. But developing countries cannot function without strong authority on the part of government.

"Unstable and weak governments will result in chaos, and chaos cannot contribute to the development and well-being of developing countries.

"Divisive politics will occupy the time and minds of everyone, as we can witness in many a developing country today."

The conference, organised by the Just World Trust, is being attended by more than 200 outstanding

human rights scholars and activists from 60 countries who are expected to examine the entire concept of human rights.

Also present were the chairman of Just World Trust S.M. Mohd Idris and its director Chandra Muzaffar.

Dr Mahathir also called for a new set of values on human rights to be devised as the liberal views of the West do not provide the answers to the woes of today's world.

He said it was timely to examine human rights not as Asians or Europeans but as members of the human race.

"We can put a man on the moon. We can examine stars light years away, we can achieve instant contact with every part of the world, we can build intelligent machines and many more wonders.

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"But we are still quite uncivilised, for when it comes to killing each other we are worse than animals."

Dr Mahathir said the developing countries, by and large, want to practise democracy but asked if they must practise only the liberal forms prescribed by the West and forms which would retard their development and continued independence.

He said, however, that developing countries were continuously being harassed through economic pressures.

These include withdrawal of aid and loans, criticisms and deliberate misinformation by the Western media and by campaigns on the part of Western NGOs, who sometimes finance pressure groups within the country to obstruct the government which they label as undemocratic.

He said even if the government is replaced, the new government would still be

whole human race in definition'

human rights

harassed.

"The record of the democratic governments of the West is not very inspiring. Unless their own interests are at stake, as in Kuwait, they would not risk anything in the cause of democracy.

"Is it any wonder that many countries are leery of the liberal system propounded by the Western democrats?"

Dr Mahathir also hit out at Western hypocrisy in Bosnia-Herzegovina and said that Western liberals were not only cowards but their logic was twisted as well.

"This then is the reality and irony of Western human rights. On the one hand other governments are threatened because of some minor breach of human rights.

"On the other hand when Western interest is not at stake they are prepared to allow the most brutal violation of human rights to take place before their very eyes."

He added that it was rather difficult for Malaysians to agree and to accept this double standard and that this unwillingness to accede has brought on a tirade of accusations about Asian recal-

trance.

"It would seem that Asians have no right to define and practise their own sets of values about human rights.

"What, we are asked, are Asian values? The question is rhetorical because the implication is that Asians cannot possibly understand human rights, much less set up their own values."

Dr Mahathir said if the

record of the Western democrats in propagating their ideology were dismal, their own human rights records were worse.

"The West's interpretation of human rights is that every individual can do what he likes, free from any restraint by governments."

He said it did not matter if the government was elected

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PM on where Western hypocrisy is at its worst

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democratically by the majority of the people.

"Governments, according to the liberal democrats, cannot in any way act against the personal wishes of the individual in society."

Dr Mahathir added that it was clear that Western society was confused as to what it wanted. It wants absolute freedom for everyone but no freedom when individual or society objects.

"And yet the West insists that freedom must in no way be fettered and that everyone must accept Western norms. They see nothing

contradictory in the contrary attitudes."

Dr Mahathir said it was with regard to freedom from oppression and brutality that Western hypocrisy was at its worst.

"Western governments, their media and their NGOs, are tireless in their condemnation of non-Western countries for their human rights records.

"They threaten sanctions, withdrawal of aid, stoppage of loans, economic and trade union boycotts and actual military strikes against those they accuse of violating human rights."

He added that they even

kidnapped people in other countries in order to try them in their courts under their laws if they saw fit to do so.

"They have no respect for independence or territorial integrity in their zeal to uphold their human rights principle."

He asked what qualified the Western liberal democrats to become both judge and executor of the behaviour of nations and citizens of other countries.

"If there is to be interference in the internal affairs of nations, should not the UN be the right body to lay down the rules and act?"