

13/12/2002

PM: Bleak future if US decides to attack Iraq

Firdaus Abdullah

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday that the future for the world order would be very bleak, dangerous and counter-productive if Iraq was attacked.

"I do hope that war against Iraq does not take place, but if it does then you can be assured of a very bleak future for the world order; we are not going to feel safe anywhere, we are going to continue to be afraid to fly, continue to have advisories not to visit other countries.

"So all these things are reaching a very silly point. We are not handling the situation properly and the future of the world will be very much affected by the anger that seems to be in everybody's bag now.

"The anger of the Americans for being attacked in the way they have never been attacked before, not even Pearl Harbour, was like this, and the anger of the Muslims because they feel that they are unjustly being condemned. So the future is not so good at the moment," Dr Mahathir said, responding to a question from the floor during a dialogue at the seminar on the 20th anniversary of the Look East Policy.

The Prime Minister said Muslims were of the view that they were being the prime target of the so-called war against terror and this has clearly affected their co-operation in the fight against terrorism.

"I'm not saying this but I'm merely quoting somebody's writing on this issue, they say that it (the threat of war) is all about oil. Iraq has oil... for some reason or another Muslim countries always have oil, so I have suggested to people that they should convert to Islam.

"Then they can have oil but since they do not want to convert to Islam, they feel that an easier way is to conquer an Islamic country like Iraq," Dr Mahathir said in jest, to thunderous laughter from the floor.

"Frankly, I think this would be counter-productive. You may get the oil but you'll earn the hatred of 1.3 billion Muslims forever and that is going to be very counter-productive."

At the session, Dr Mahathir was also asked about his views on the shift in US policies and the expansion of its defence budget, weapons procurements and the so-called pre-emptive attacks.

Dr Mahathir said the strategy of the on-going war against terror was not right in effectively fighting terrorism since the root causes of the scourge had to be identified and eliminated.

On pre-emptive strikes, the Prime Minister said that such an ill-mannered idea had also influenced Australia to request the UN to amend existing international laws to permit such action.

"If this is allowed, the world would be in a state of perpetual turmoil," he said.