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Japan can play peacemaker to reconcile Muslims, non-Muslims

JAPAN can play the role of peacemaker to balance the current thorny relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims as it enjoys a good relationship with both sides, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

The Prime Minister said Japan could study the current situation of anger, hatred and terror attacks impartially.

"I think Japan has a very good role to play. At the moment, Japan is not the target (of terror attacks), we can expect Japan to balance the violent situation.

"You have no quarrel with the Arabs, you have no quarrel with the Jews, you have no quarrel with anybody, but you have to be rational to figure out why these things (terror attacks) are happening," Dr Mahathir said.

He was responding to a question from a Japanese university professor after presenting his keynote address at the Symposium on Islam at the United Nations University.

The Prime Minister was asked of his expectations of Japan in promoting negotiation/dialogue between Muslims and non-Muslims.

"To me, there is a reason for everything. If the Arabs who were not terrorists before, are today willing to commit suicide in order to fight the Israelis or Americans, there must be a strong reason for this."

Dr Mahathir added that the reason was that the Arabs felt that the Americans, Europeans and Jews were unjust to them.

He said if Japan could persuade its friends in the US and Europe to see the reality of the situation and address them accordingly, it could help reduce anger on both sides.

Dr Mahathir said the solution could not be achieved solely by increasing security measures or enhancing defence budgets, but by solving the Muslims' perception that they were under oppression.

Responding to another question, Dr Mahathir said at present, it seemed that the world had progressed much faster than human civilisation.

"Science and technology has taken us very far ahead with new capabilities to do a lot of good as well as bad, but we are still relatively uncivilised. If you are strong, then you can get everything. If you are weak, you lose everything.

"For example, recently the Australian Prime Minister (John Howard) wanted to change international law to allow pre-emptive strikes in other countries. That shows that the thinking has not kept up with the capabilities.

"This is the kind of thinking that will be compatible with a very uncivilised world.

"If I may say so, we seem to be living in the Stone Age," Dr Mahathir said, adding that even the World Trade Organisation and other international institutions lacked morality in the true sense.

He said the world was sliding towards greater injustice and discrimination of the poor and weak, with the rich and powerful often dictating and imposing their "judgments" on others, even if these spelt disaster for the receivers.

"For instance, today they don't allow a plurality of systems, you are only allowed to practise democracy. If you don't, then you'll be starved to death.

"It is okay to propagate democracy, but do so in a democratic way," he

said, adding that there was a world of difference between what was preached and what was practiced by the "preachers".