

Stone-age culture still rules: Mahathir

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KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad criticised the world community yesterday for failing to learn how to cope with disputes and to manage itself, judging from the situations in Iraq, North Korea, Palestine and other hotspots around the globe.

The prime minister said that despite all the technological progress and claims of having a more humane and sophisticated civilisation, the capacity to kill as the determinant of strength was still the name of the game.

"Frankly, I do not think we have progressed much from the Stone Age. They used clubs and we use nuclear weapons, but the premise is still the same," he said when opening the 11th annual meeting of the Asia Pacific Parliamentary Forum (APPF) here.

Mahathir said the world must get away from its old culture and values, and reinvent its civilisation.

"It is time that we pause and rethink. Labelling people as Satan or 'axis of evil' merely provokes but does not resolve anything. Oppressing people or destroying their countries will not solve problems either," he said.

The United States has dubbed Iraq, Iran and North Korea as the "axis of evil" that allegedly threatens world peace with weapons of mass destruction.

Referring to the spectre of war in Iraq stemming from

suspicious that it possesses such weapons, Mahathir said that despite the fact that North Korea had admitted that it had nuclear capability, it was not being threatened with war as Iraq was.

"We do not want to see North Korea being threatened with war and the country being militarily attacked. But the accommodating attitude towards North Korea is going to anger the Muslims more," he said.

"Cutting off the supply of food and other necessities will not bring it to its knees. Perhaps we can nuclear bomb

it out of existence but that would be a confession of our failure," he said.

Elaborating on Iraq, Mahathir said there was a time when Muslim countries were in agreement over the need to stop Iraqi aggression but that unity of purpose had disappeared today.

"Muslims see the stance taken against Iraq as another act of discrimination against Muslims," he said.

If Iraq were attacked, not only would it be a distraction in the fight against global terrorism but it was likely to increase the number of re-

cruits to the ranks of terrorists.

Mahathir said there were many causes of terrorism the principal reason behind it was territorial and not religious, as shown by what had to be endured by the Palestinians.

"The terrorism that assails the world today has a direct connection with the fate of the Palestinians," he said, noting that the Israelis should know by now that defence and security measures and even out-terrorising the "terrorists" had not stopped the suicide bombers.