

PM: East-West clash looms

PUTRAJAYA: The world has been sucked into a dangerous "clash of civilizations" by the West's failure to understand Muslim grievances, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

Speaking exclusively to AFP ahead of a visit by French President Jacques Chirac, he defended his recent vilification of Westerners as greedy war-mongers aiming to dominate the world.

His **characterisation** of Europeans as war-like and greedy was "not actually criticism, it was just a statement of the facts".

Mahathir cited as proof a long list of Western wars, describing the conquest of the original inhabitants of North America and Australia as "genocide". This characteristic was reflected in modern times by the US-led invasion of Iraq, he said.

"Now we see the actual invasion of a country because that country is seen to be not democratic. How democratic is the imposition of democracy through conquest?"

Mahathir said US President George W. Bush's statement after the Sept 11 terror attacks that either "you are with us or against us" was misguided. "We are with them half-way, but not all the way. As far as fighting against terrorism is concerned, yes, we are with America, but the way in which it is being fought, we think is wrong so we cannot be with them". - AFP

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