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Mahathir-World

THE WORLD HAS NOT PROGRESSED MUCH FROM STONE AGE, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 13 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today voiced out his feeling that the world community has failed to learn how to cope and manage itself, judging from the situations in Iraq, North Korea, Palestine and other hot spots around the globe.

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

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

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

"It is time that we pause and rethink. Labelling people as satan or 'axis of evil' merely provoke 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 suspicions that it possesses such weapons, Dr 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.

Noting that North Korea was never an easy country to deal with, Dr Mahathir said that this should not stop the world from learning how to befriend it and get its cooperation.

"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, the Prime Minister said that there was a time when Muslim countries were in agreement over the need to stop Iraqi aggressiveness but that unity of purpose had today disappeared.

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

If Iraq was attacked, he said, not only would it be a distraction in the fight against global terrorism but it was likely to increase the number of recruits to the ranks of terrorists.

Dr Mahathir said that there were many causes of terrorism but insisted that the principle reason behind it was territorial and not religions, 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.

The Prime Minister said that the success of the Sept 11, 2001 terror attacks on the United States was due much more to the wrong handling of the situation than the extent of the actual damage done.

He said that the perpetrators had really shaken the world and it looked like everybody was going to feel fear and the consequences for a long time.

"We fear flying, we fear travelling, we fear certain countries, we fear certain religions, we fear certain people, we fear the shoes they wear, we fear cargo ships, imported goods, letters and parcels -- in fact, we fear everything around us," he said in describing the aftermath of Sept 11.

Dr Mahathir said that terror had become as globalized as trade and investments and, as such, he told his audience that the law and policy makers of the world could not limit their interest to their countries alone.

The APPF is a non-exclusive forum of national parliamentarians founded by former Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone in 1991.

About 150 delegates from 27 countries are attending the three-day event to discuss world issues in an informal environment.

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