

'Out-terrorising' strategy pointless: Mahathir

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IT WOULD be more effective for heads of religious institutions to convince world leaders to help remove the causes of terrorism, than trying to convince terror groups to stop their aggression.

Former premier Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, an invited speaker, said this when addressing delegates during the second day of the congress.

Mahathir said: "Perhaps religious heads could persuade would-be terrorists not to blow up aircraft and their passengers but frankly, I do not think this will work."

He said no matter who talks to them (terror groups), the pain will always be there and these people who threaten international security have no other means to fight their powerful enemies except via terror attacks.

He said the anger and frustration of the Palestinian people have reached a stage where "rationality" is no longer possible.

"Bereft of other weapons, they resort to blowing themselves up and killing innocent people," he said.

Mahathir said the world must realise that the strategy of "out-terrorising" the terrorists by Israel and the United States is not working.

"All that we see is an escalation in their counter-attacks and the whole

world feels insecure and we are even being haunted by the fear of being blown out of the sky whenever we fly," he said.

He called on religious heads to convince leaders of the countries against whom the attacks are directed to try and understand the problem and deal with the root causes.

Later, in response to a question by *theSun*, Mahathir said the fervour of multi-cultural relations in Malaysia is the same as in Kazakhstan.

"But, of course, there will be groups (in Malaysia) which will try to promote differences among the races but it is up to the majority to ensure that differences are settled in a proper way," he said.

Asked what may have caused racial polarisation in the country and if it will grow to become a "painful thorn on the side" in later years, he said: "It is partly due to political reasons."

"Because certain parties play up Islamic issues there will be a tendency for other parties to attempt to also make use of religion to seek 'religious justification' by themselves.

"In the process they might become more extreme and this will lead to the kind of problems we see among the people today," he said.