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Dr M: Ostracise people like Blair

■ By Fadhal A. Ghani
and Lee Shi-lan
news@nst.com.my

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KUALA LUMPUR: The international community should ostracise war criminals as punishment for killing the innocent in the name of war, former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

He said the boycott effort should be focused on the principal players like the United States, which invaded Iraq, and its allies.

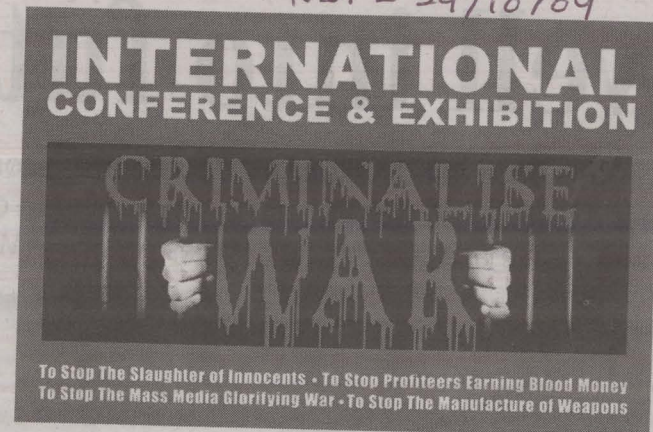
He said it was wrong for former British prime minister Tony Blair to be allowed into Sabah recently as he was a war criminal.

"We thought that he came to Sabah for a holiday recently but he was actually invited to give a talk on justice. What does he know about justice?"

"It is disgraceful that we should allow such a person to come to Malaysia and talk about justice. It is ridiculous."

Dr Mahathir was speaking after a keynote address at the International Conference & Exhibition — Criminalise War at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

He said some had agreed to become allies of those who began wars as they feared them because of their power.



Dr Mahathir, who is also chairman of the Perdana Global Peace Organisation (PGPO), said changing the minds of people about war should be done in a radical manner, including through public opinion.

He said war should be abolished as it could turn ordinary humans into animals capable of torturing others.

"The Americans are the ones who detained and tortured the Iraqis for years. Let the Iraqis decide whether they want the Americans there or want them to withdraw."

Dr Mahathir said it did not matter whether the aggressors won or lost a war, as they were guilty of killing the innocent. "Their leaders must be

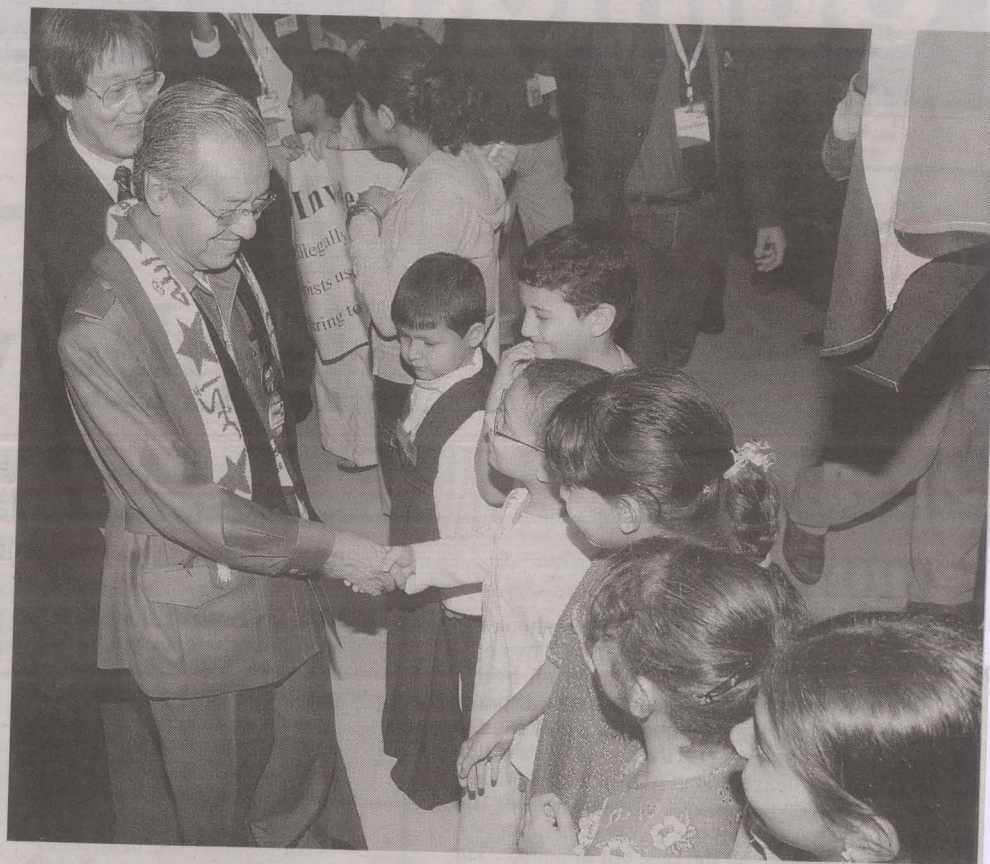
tried and punished. Punished severely. Only this will deter the aggressive from resorting to war."

He said that while the media played a role in educating people about war, the international media played the opposite role of encouraging war.

He said war was interesting for the international media as it provided nice photographs besides giving journalists a chance to enter battle zones.

"However, most members of the international media do not reveal the truth as they are generally provocative and encourage war."

He said the international media was largely controlled by people like Rupert Murdoch, who were pro-America



Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad meeting some of the Iraqi children present at the launch of the conference and exhibition yesterday. — NST pictures by Saifullizan Tamadi

in their policies.

"I hope good sense will prevail in the media, especially that in the East."

Earlier in his speech, Dr Mahathir said the quest for the most powerful weapon should ideally be over as war should no longer be an option in the settlement of disputes between nations.

"Unfortunately, the great nuclear powers are still developing, testing and producing nuclear weapons. They talk of safe nuclear bombs, of small

nuclear bombs and tactical nuclear bombs.

"Already, they are using depleted uranium in their bombs and missiles which are causing diseases like cancer to spread among hundreds of thousands who survived their attacks."

On tribunals to try war criminals, he said the PGPO had taken the initiative to form a tribunal.

"We may be accused of being biased but we find reluctance on the part of neutralists

to participate in our initiative. There is evidence that even those who are neutral fear retaliation by the powerful."

Dr Mahathir said judges on the tribunal would act in the impartial, fair and just manner that they were known for.

"If the accused persons fail to present themselves, then they may appoint counsel to represent them, failing which we will appoint counsel for them," he said, adding that the proceedings would follow the British common law system.