

Anti-war meet in December, forum to feature eminent speakers

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Kuala Lumpur - A major global anti-war campaign is necessary even if it is seen as "America-bashing", former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

"You can't help that because America itself is bashing a lot of people," he said as he announced details of an international anti-war conference to be held here in December. The Perdana Global Peace Forum, which he is organising, will feature eminent speakers, including Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao, former Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke and British MP George Galloway.

They are expected to talk about the evils of war and mobilise a global movement for peace. Dr Mahathir, who is president of the Perdana Leadership Foundation, said the idea is to create an awareness as passionate as that for the environment.

"Efforts by non-governmental organisations and activists on issues concerning the environment have been very successful. We can do the same thing for peace. We think there should be a global movement where people talk about and condemn war. In elections, people who don't stand up for peace should not get support," he added.

Among the topics to be discussed at the three-day forum beginning Dec 15 at the Putra World Trade Centre will be terrorism, the lessons of Iraq and Afghanistan, the culture of suicide terrorism and designing a strategic framework for "winning the peace". Other topics include war crimes, globalisation in the context of counter-terrorism, and the role of the media in striking the right balance between informing the public and protecting it from terrorism.

Also up for discussion will be how the various religions could come together with a peace agenda. The forum will also attempt to give a human face to the horrors of war by featuring the children of Palestine and the mayor of Jenin in one of the sessions. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi will deliver a keynote address on "Islam and Peace" at the forum dinner on Dec 16, while Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak will close the event on Dec 17 with a speech titled "Towards a world without violence".