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Dr M: Criminalise wars of aggression

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Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad says war makes beasts of ordinary men and women

KUALA LUMPUR: There would be fewer wars and less need for defence if wars of aggression are criminalised, says former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, adding that war makes beasts of ordinary men and women.

"They are perpetrated by ordinary human beings who have been trained by civilised governments to kill," he said at the royal charity dinner here last night, which was organised by the Kuala Lumpur Foundation to Criminalise War.

The dinner, attended by Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin, was to raise funds to facilitate

the foundation's voluntary programmes on a national and global basis as well as to acquire suitable premises to serve as its headquarters.

He said modern wars could not be confined within the border of warring nations. Whole regions would be affected.

"For most people, war is what happens in other countries and to other people. We should, therefore, not be too bothered about war.

"But can we call ourselves civilised people if we do not care at all for the misery, pain and death that other people suffer? Can we be so sure that nothing of the kind will happen to us?"

Dr Mahathir also said that killing people and destroying countries was "not a legitimate way to solve problems between nations".

"Every single human society regards killing as a crime; a crime so serious that it warrants the harshest of punishment. How do we reconcile this with the legitimacy of killing people on a massive scale, in their hundreds of thousands, accompanied by extensive destruction to towns and cities?"

"We must be the worst hypocrites if we say it is proper to kill hundreds of thousands because it is a war but killing one person warrants the death penalty.

"The murderer kills amateurishly, crudely, exposing himself to arrest and severe punishment. But, is he worse than the trained killers, equipped with the most destructive of weapons, protected with armour and free from retribution?"

The Kuala Lumpur Foundation to Criminalise War was established last year to bring unity and peace to nations.

The not-for-profit foundation provides assistance and relief to victims of war as well as promotes education of individuals and communities suffering from the effects of war or armed conflict.