

# US a threat to small nations: PM

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KUALA LUMPUR The United States, which Malaysia considers "a friend," is now a threat to the future of small countries, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said last night.

"The future now looks bleak for small countries like Malaysia as long as the United States continues to flex its muscle as the sole superpower," the Prime Minister said.

"I had said at the United Nations that there was no international democracy. In international diplomacy might is right," he added.

The Prime Minister was commenting on a report in *The Star* that Washington had formally asked Japan not to join the East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC).

*The Star* report, quoting the Japanese business daily *Nihon Kezai Shimbun*, said US Secretary of

State James Baker had made a request in a memorandum to Japan,

Mr Baker's memorandum warned that the EAEC would divide the Asia-Pacific region.

The Prime Minister said he did not understand why Washington had taken such a stand even after he had "explain at length" to Mr Baker on the Malaysian-proposed caucus.

"The EAEC was designed to protect free trade for which the United States had supposedly been promoting all along.

"But it was expected from the very beginning that if anyone was to oppose the proposal it would be the United States," he told newsmen after chairing the Umno Supreme Council meeting at the party headquarters.

He said only two things could be concluded from the US action: that Washington was either not for

free trade or now that they were the only superpower it was no longer necessary for them to consider the views of others.

Expressing his disappointment and sadness over the US action, Dr Mahathir said:

"During the Gulf War, President (George) Bush had contacted me and ask for Malaysia's support on its resolutions and we supported them in the (UN) Security Council.

"But now this is the kind of gratitude we receive in return. They do not appreciate our stand and support."

Asked what action Malaysia could take, Dr Mahathir said: "What action can we take against a superpower? What can we do? There is nothing we can do as we are not strong.

"This is a sign that the freedom and-indepen-

dence of smaller countries will be eroded.

"I am now worried about the future as we are not even allowed to call ourselves East Asians or to promote co-operation in the region."

Dr Mahathir also said that Japan had stated that it will not do anything that would jeopardise its relationship with the United States.

"We are not angry with Japan as we understand that they depend on the United States for its trade and defence.

"But we appreciate Japan's help on other matters not opposed by the United States and we thank Japan," he added.

Dr Mahathir said the EAEC would still be viable even without Japan.

"It may not be as effective (as we had wanted it to be) but we will continue to promote the caucus," he added.