

Dr Mahathir disappointed with

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad tonight said he was sad and disappointed that the United States had formally asked Japan to reject the East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC).

This only confirms the belief that the US, which appeared to be exhorting universal free trade, was in fact against it, thinking that "might is right."

Dr Mahathir said that de-

veloping and independent countries now face a bleak future because international freedom and democracy had now been eroded.

"It would appear that as a superpower, they (the US) do not need to consider the views of others," Dr Mahathir told reporters after chairing an Umno supreme council meeting at party headquarters here.

"We always knew the US had been a major stumbling block to the proposed forma-

tion of the EAEC," he added.

The Umno president was responding to a report in the *Nihon Kezai Shimbun*, Japan's top economic daily, which said that the United States has formally requested Japan not to participate in the EAEC.

Dr Mahathir said he was disappointed because he thought by being allies, the US would appreciate Malaysia's initiative, particularly after it had supported the US-sponsored United Na-

tions Security Council resolution to take action against Iraq during the Gulf War.

Even the personal support Dr Mahathir gave to President George Bush when the latter contacted him to support the resolution was unappreciated.

"We still do not understand why the US is so against the EAEC...it is so harmless plan only to protect free trade," he added.

Dr Mahathir said despite the US action, Malaysia will

US action on EAEC

not retaliate as "nothing can be done about it."

Despite the lengthy explanation given to Secretary of State James Baker on the viability of the EAEC at the recent Asean-US dialogue here, the US still found it necessary to reject it.

Malaysia will not blame Japan if it backs out of the EAEC because the latter depended heavily on the US for trading and defence.

Malaysia, the Prime Minister said, still appreciated

the help Japan gave to Malaysia on matters that were not objected to by the US.

When asked by reporters whether the EAEC would still be viable without Japan's involvement, he said its effectiveness may be slightly affected.

"It would more or less be effective," he quipped.

On tomorrow's Umno general assembly, Dr Mahathir said the African National Congress and Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party

would not be sending observers as planned.

However, observers from Indonesia's ruling Golkar Party and Singapore's Peke-mas will be attending.

Only two resolutions will be tabled — one on the motion of thanks for the presidential address and the other on the economy.

This is to give delegates more time to debate the proposed amendments to the party constitution.