

# Don't punish all, West told

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## PM: I was chosen by Kubang Pasu folk, not the US

By LESLIE LAU

KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday that the West should not punish the Malaysian public just because it did not like him.

Drawing comparisons between his own unpopularity with the West and that of Iraqi president Saddam Hussein, the Prime Minister said:

"What's the point of torturing and killing children just because you don't like Saddam Hussein?"

"So, if the West doesn't like me, don't torture the Malaysian rakyat."

Speaking at a gathering of more than 1,000 Felda settlement heads here, Dr Mahathir appealed to all Malaysians to stand together in the face of foreign pressure.

As an example, he made references to the United States' meddling in Malaysian affairs and lamented the fact that "my former deputy seems to have been helped by these foreigners."

"I don't know why they want to meddle in our affairs and why the United States is uncomfortable with me.

"Now they are angry with me and they are calling on the people to revolt," he said.

Stressing that his Government could be re-

placed through the electoral process, the Prime Minister then quipped that "it very much depends on the people of Kubang Pasu for if they don't vote for me I cannot be the Prime Minister."

"I wasn't chosen by the United States but by the people of Kubang Pasu," he said to loud applause from the settlers.

Dr Mahathir said he did not choose to create the present political crisis because "it is already tough enough handling the economic crisis."

He said he had a responsibility to ensure his successor should be "good and honest".

"I found my former deputy was not qualified (to lead the country) because he did not adhere to our *adat resam* (customs and traditions)," the Prime Minister said.

He said instead of yielding to foreign pressure, the people should instead count their blessings as the country had weathered the economic crisis relatively well.

He said that had Malaysia succumbed to taking an International Monetary Fund loan, the country's businesses and banks would have been taken over by foreigners.

The people, he said, would also suffer because one of the conditions of an IMF loan was the removal of subsidies.