

Wrong to oust Saddam by force: PM

KUALA LUMPUR: The United States' intention to use military action against Iraq to oust its president, Saddam Hussein, is wrong, unjust and undemocratic, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

"We don't think other governments have a right, no matter how powerful they are, to change the government of another country. That is an undemocratic thing to do," he said, responding to a question from the floor at the Inter-

national Forum on Islam (*see page 7*).

Asked what is the likely impact on Malaysia's continuous efforts to promote a modest and forward-looking Islam if the Bush administration were to move its armed forces towards Iraq, Mahathir said a military force against Iraq would only provoke greater hatred as the US quarrel is with Saddam, not the people of Iraq.

US President George W. Bush had said that Washington would use all

tools at its disposal to topple Saddam.

"It's up to the people (of Iraq) to change their government if they can, but they are unable. But because they cannot do so, it's not fair to punish them.

"But when you focus on Iraq, the people who will suffer are the hapless people of Iraq. Then of course you are going to arouse ill-feelings and in Malaysia, we think that it is the wrong thing to do," Mahathir said.