

# Use oil as a weapon: Mahathir

SUN - 4 OCT 2002

**MALACCA:** Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has called on Muslim countries, particularly Opec (Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries) members, to unite and use oil as a "weapon" to defend the ummah (community).

"Oil is the only thing the Muslims have which the rest of the world needs," the prime minister said.

"They can determine supply. If they cut back on supply, they will not be oppressed by others."

He lamented that the Muslim countries instead disagreed among themselves and in the process, became ineffective.

"When one party wants to cut back on supply, another will increase supply (either) legally or illegally.

"As a result, they are unable to use oil as a weapon to defend the Muslims," Mahathir said after opening the third Malay and Islamic World Convention in Tanjung

Keling.

When asked if the time was right to use oil as a weapon to defend the Muslims as he suggested, the prime minister said Opec did not consist entirely of Muslim countries.

"There are non-Muslim countries involved with Opec. So, it is up to the Muslim countries to do what they can," he said.

Opec is an international organisation of 11 oil exporting countries which rely heavily on oil revenues

for their income.

Its members are Algeria, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Venezuela.

Opec members collectively supply about 40% of the world's oil output and possess over three quarters of total proven crude oil reserves.

Asked if he agreed with the contention that US President George W. Bush's intention to invade Iraq was connected with controlling oil sup-

plies, Mahathir said: "The fact is that Iraq is an oil producer, but more importantly, I think Afghanistan is a factor."

He said this was because oil from central Asia would not reach the sea without passing through Afghanistan.

"So there are some who say that the reason for the enmity towards Afghanistan is because they refuse to allow the pipeline to be built through that country," he added.