

# Removing Saddam won't help: PM

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**PUTRAJAYA:** Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday said removing President Saddam Hussein from power and bringing democracy to Iraq will not solve the problems affecting that country, nor will it tackle international terrorism effectively.

The prime minister also said US President George W. Bush is taking the wrong stance in his fight against terrorism because the Americans are angered by the Sept 11 attacks and angry people usually do not

think rationally.

The key to tackling terrorism is finding the root causes of it, he told 40 international and local media fellows during a one-hour dialogue at his office here yesterday. The group had come for the East Asia Economic Summit organised by the World Economic Forum in Kuala Lumpur.

Mahathir said Malaysia also faced a terrorist insurgency when it attained independence 45 years ago, but managed to find its root causes.

It was identified at the time that

many Chinese residents felt they did not have a stake in the country as they were not given citizenship. As such, about one million Chinese in the country were given citizenship papers and the insurgents eventually gave up their fight, Mahathir said.

He also said Bush should listen to the views of the international community. Save for Britain, he said, the other countries are not supportive of air strikes against Iraq.

To a question on whether a change in regime could solve the problems in Iraq, Mahathir said democracy alone cannot solve all the problems. He cited the situation in a few Latin American countries as example.

When asked to elaborate on his call to Muslim countries to use oil as a weapon, Mahathir said his suggestion was based on the premise that these countries produce most of the world's oil, and so they have some strength through the commod-

ity. However, Mahathir feels that Muslim countries are still divided and weak and this is causing them to be oppressed by other countries.

On relations with Singapore, he said: "We are still on talking terms."

However, Mahathir said there are several issues that needs to be resolved. They include Singapore's intention to purchase raw water from Malaysia, the inaccessibility of Singapore's Central Provident Fund by Malaysians who have worked there, and land reclamation.