

Bush has pushed himself into a corner; says Dr Mahathir

Not 13 OCT 2002

■ From Manan Osman
in Bandar Seri Begawan

news@nstp.com.my

DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said a United States attack on Iraq was imminent as President George W. Bush had "pushed himself into a corner" with his statement that such an action did not need the United Nations sanction.

The Prime Minister said it was just a matter of time before the US carried out its threat to fight the Gulf State.

"He has committed himself to it and if he doesn't, he will lose face and people will not think highly of him.

"I am sure at some stage he will do it and is trying to stop anything that comes in the way of a war with Iraq," he said during a dialogue with Ma-

laysians in Brunei at the International Convention Centre.

He said if a war broke out, it would affect the entire world, including Malaysia, especially as the US was one of its major trading partners.

Dr Mahathir said in view of the situation, Malaysia was working towards reducing its dependence on US for trade and instead enhancing inter-Asean trade.

Malaysia, he said, opposed any attempt to attack Iraq as it would not help oust Iraqi President Saddam Hussein but would instead cause more resentment among the Islamic world and result in untold suffering among the Iraqis.

In fact, he said, a war would create

□ TURN TO PAGE 2, COL 4

'Muslim nations must not leave UN'

Not 13 OCT 2002

□ FROM PAGE 1

fear and anger within the international community can result in more attacks which would destabilise the world.

Earlier, at a Press conference at Istana Darut Taqwa to wind up his two-day working visit, he said Muslim countries should not make hasty decisions to leave the United Nations.

"If we leave the UN, our influence will further decline. For instance, now the UN is under pressure to sanction an attack on Iraq. If we are not in the UN to vote against the attack, maybe, the world body would support the move and at that time the Muslim community would be disappointed," he said.

According to him, the Muslims were oppressed as they were weak and disunity was prevalent among them.

"They do not venture to learn skills and knowledge in specific areas including military. Therefore, they themselves ought to be blamed."

On the US Congress decision to pass a resolution for an attack on Iraq with or without UN approval, he said it was the Congress' right

"That is the US's right. The UN's right is to supervise and ensure that any such action should first receive its sanction.

"But the problem is that the UN is also disunited and it does not have the power or the might to stop the US from attacking Iraq," he said.