

# KL welcomes Iraq's response to UN call

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**PUTRA-JAYA:** Malaysia welcomed Iraq's decision to accept a new United Nations Security Council resolution calling on Baghdad to disarm but is sceptical that the threat of war against Iraq is over.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said that there would be other accusations against Iraq that would justify military action.

"For the time being, there will be a respite, until the US feels it (Iraq) is no longer a threat," he said during a dialogue with 31 members of the Japan National Press Club yesterday.

Mahathir said Malaysia opposes any military action against Iraq as it would anger more Muslims.

"Because any act will anger more Muslims and there'll be more recruited for the terrorist groups, that is why we oppose military action," he said.

Iraq on Wednesday accepted the new UN Security Council resolution demanding Baghdad allow UN arms experts access to any site suspected of producing chemical, biological or nuclear

weapons, or face the consequences.

On claims that Southeast Asia was protecting terrorists, Mahathir described the allegations as "half truths".

While not denying that there were terrorist activities in the region, he said Malaysia was "very cautious".

"We have taken action to put a stop to these activities. We have the Internal Security Act. We can detain people if we have evidence that their activities are detrimental to the security of the country.

"We know these people are capable of violence, and we have to stop them from carrying out their plans. We can see how they caused tremendous damage in Indonesia," he said.

The prime minister said the government detected these activities very early and had been able to prevent things from happening.

"We are generally more stable and we maintain that Malaysia is a safe country," he said.

"We should not be categorised as a risky country, not to be visited by tou-

rists. All races live together harmoniously, we have no racial problems. Of course, we have minor disputes that can be settled," Mahathir said.

He said until today there has been no attempt to find the reasons which led to terrorism.

He said many instead preferred to deal with the problem through military means or by increasing the security system rather than finding out the roots of terrorism.

"In fighting against terrorism, it is important to know why they are doing all these things (terrorising), why they are willing to committ suicide. If you know why, then you can tackle the problem," he said.

Responding to questions on the economy, he said the country was doing reasonably well despite the downturn throughout the world.

"We can continue the recovery into the next year. We should have performed much better, but there was the downturn in the US. This year will be better and next year will be better still."