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Dr M: Malaysia firmly against attack on Iraq

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MALAYSIA is against any attack on Iraq, especially if one is made without being sanctioned by the United Nations, said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

An attack would only worsen matters and make people think animosity against Muslims was behind it. As a result, there would be more terrorist activities, he added.

The Prime Minister was replying to a question about a possible US attack on Iraq at a Press conference at the end of his two-day visit to India yesterday.

On the role of the Organisation of Islamic Conference, Dr Mahathir said the OIC was against an attack on Iraq but, unfortunately, its members did not speak with one voice.

"Hopefully, they will be able to formulate our common stand (when Malaysia hosts the OIC meeting next year), if it is not too late."

Dr Mahathir said that where international issues were concerned, there should not be unilateral action. Action should only be taken after being sanctioned by the UN. The UN was being neglected, he added.

On talks with his Indian counterpart Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Dr Mahathir said trade and economic issues were discussed and that there should be more frequent flights to facilitate contacts.

The number of landing rights presently were not adequate, and Malaysia Airlines was seeking more flights to New Delhi and Mumbai.

Malaysia was also seeking to reduce the import duty on palm oil, which was much higher than that imposed on soyabean oil imports from the US.

There was room as well for increased participation by Malaysian contractors. Malaysia was also keen to see India play a role in the World Trade Organisation negotiations.

On many of the issues, India's views were similar to those of Malaysia and other developing countries.

On India-Asean co-operation, Dr Mahathir said Asean was being viewed as a good trading partner and India was keen to get closer to the grouping.

The Asean-India Summit in Phnom Penh next month should see heightened co-operation between Asean and India in areas of promise.

On his legacy as Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir said the most important thing was continuing harmony in multi-racial Malaysia.