

# Council of Churches urges US not to attack Iraq

STAR 5 FEB 2003

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The Council of Churches of Malaysia has joined the various national and international groups in calling on the United States not to start a war with Iraq.

It strongly felt that any pre-emptive action against Iraq outside the framework of the UN resolution would not reflect the will of the international community.

Council general secretary Rev Dr Herman Shastri said a war would cause untold suffering for innocent men, women, children and the environment.

"It will also have a devastating effect on the political stability of the region and further aggravate worldwide terrorism," he said in a statement.

The heads of the churches of the Council met in Cameron Highlands from Feb 11 to 13 and expressed concern over the escalating tension in the Middle East and the imminent prospect of war in Iraq.

Dr Herman said the council also viewed the ongoing conflict in Israel and Palestine with concern and called on the international community, through the UN, to ensure security in the troubled areas and safety for civilians as well as to work for a

peaceful resolution of issues through diplomatic negotiations.

"We join our Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the Government and other civil and religious groups in saying 'No to War.'

"We are compelled by the message of Jesus Christ to pursue the path of peace in the world," he said.

Dr Herman said the council urged all churches to offer special prayers for God's hand to be upon the world leaders so that they would act prudently and ensure the development of a just and peaceful world.

He said first Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman had set the country on the right path by building the nation on the principles of inter-racial understanding and inter-religious harmony.

"We resolve to join in solidarity with churches around the world and all peoples of goodwill to say 'No to War.'

"We encourage all Christians to witness our desire for peace by participating in the current national signature campaign and joining in peace rallies organised by civil and religious groups on Feb 23 at Bukit Jalil, Kuala Lumpur," he said.