

# PM. urges UN to take full control of Iraq

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**ALGIERS:** Malaysia has urged the United Nations to immediately take full control of the situation in Iraq, fearing that the country is likely to descend into anarchy.

"The Iraqis must regain their independence soonest," Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said during his three-day official visit to Algeria.

He said Malaysia would like a return to the multilateral system in achieving world peace through the UN, especially in solving the problem in Iraq.

He was speaking at a state dinner hosted by Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika at the Palais Du Peuple (Palace of the People) on Monday.

Mahathir, who arrived here on Sunday evening, is leading a 127-member delegation comprising senior ministers and businessmen.

The prime minister, an outspoken critic of the US-led invasion of Iraq, made the remarks following international concerns on the Iraqi situation, especially the inability of the US forces to administer the country.

The remarks came several days before his scheduled

official visit to Damascus on Saturday where talks with Syrian President Dr Bashar Al-Assad are expected to touch on the situation in neighbouring Iraq.

On terrorism, Mahathir said Muslim countries must unite to defend the image of Islam which had been por-

trayed as a religion that promotes acts of terror.

In terms of bilateral trade, he said statistics of the last few years show an upward trend with last year's trade amounting to about US\$100 million (RM380 million).

"This figure is marginal and does not reflect the true

potential of our trade. I believe much more can be done," he said.

In his speech, Bouteflika praised Malaysia's initiative in promoting dialogues among cultures and civilisations to eliminate prejudices and restore the true image of Islam.