

US has changed, says Dr Mahathir

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BANGKOK: The United States should learn from the past where its actions won the hearts of many, rather than try to solve conflicts with its current approach of using force, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

"I have great admiration for the US. It saved us from Japanese occupation and, at one time, it was very concerned about the welfare of everybody. It gave aid here and there.

"It sent Peace Corps people. But today it is sad to see that American embassies have to be protected.

"That's the measure of the bad feelings against the Americans now," he said in an interview with the *Bangkok Post* which was published here yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said the earlier positive feeling towards the United States had changed because of a change in its attitude.

"It has become so powerful. It is the only power in the world and it doesn't care anymore whether we like it or not.

"It can force us to submit to it and that is the basis of its foreign policy, using force," he added.

Dr Mahathir added that using force to



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make people democratic was wrong.

"(It says) If you are not a democratic country, I will apply sanctions against you. People must accept democracy because it is a good system.

"You preach democracy, you don't go around saying, 'Now, you must be democratic'," he said.

On the US policy on terrorism, Dr Mahathir said it would not be able to solve the problem by using force alone, no matter how strong it might be.

He said this was the case in Iraq, where the United States could conquer the country but not subdue it, adding that people would "take pot shots at you".

When asked about his speech at the Organisation of Islamic Conference recently that raised a furor in the United States, Europe and Australia, Dr Mahathir said the foreign press only picked up one sentence of his speech and left out the other parts where he condemned violence, including suicide bombings.

"Well, the reaction of the world shows that they control the world. The Europeans, Americans and others want to condemn me when, in fact, one chap (leader) said all Muslims were terrorists."

Dr Mahathir said he had called on the Israelis and the Arabs to stop all these killings.

"I even quoted from the Quran which says that when the enemy offers to make peace, you must accept.

"I told the Muslims, you must accept even if the terms are bad, you have to negotiate. This is the teaching of Islam.

"This was in my speech. But they took out one sentence from it and called me anti-Semitic," he said.

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