

Iraq worse off now, says Dr M

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'More Iraqis going to be killed'

KUALA LUMPUR: Iraq's plunge into violence since Saddam Hussein's fall has stirred enmities that will kill more Iraqis than ever perished under his reign, former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

"They have disturbed a hornet's nest. I know Saddam is not the nicest person in the world but by the time this thing ends, more Iraqis are going to be killed than Saddam ever did," Dr Mahathir said in an interview.

"The Iraqis are being made to suffer in order to save them and I don't believe in that," he added.

He spoke as US forces tightened their grip around one of Iraq's holiest cities, Najaf, vowing to kill or capture a rebel Shi'ite cleric.

Dr Mahathir said the risks of terror attacks in Iraq and around the globe have rocketed since the Washington-led invasion, rejecting US President George W. Bush's suggestion the world was better off with Saddam out of power.

"Is it better off now? I think it is worse off. Today, the fear of terrorism is far greater," he said in reference to Bush's remarks during a prime time news conference on Tuesday.

"Fear of terrorism in Iraq cer-

tainly was not there before and is there now," said Dr Mahathir, adding that the March 11 bombings in Madrid showed the dangers posed to the rest of the world.

"Now you look after the railway stations but can you be sure that they will not attack other things? So the world is going to spend huge sums of money trying to secure itself only to find that it is not secure."

Dr Mahathir said any solution would have to include Palestine, allowing Palestinians to claim back territories they lost to Israel. — Reuters