

# US move reflects arm-twisting tactics: Mahathir

By OTHMAN ABU BAKAR

THE US Congress' move to cut off the US\$1 million (US\$1=M\$2.70) annual military grant to Malaysia reflects the US Government's arm-twisting tactics to suppress this country economically, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"I am saddened by this move as it shows that the US will not hesitate to resort to such tactics if it has the chance to do so to a smaller nation," he told newsmen after closing the 44th World Amateur Bodybuilding Championships in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

The Prime Minister was responding to questions on the amendment to the US Foreign Assistance Act, passed by the US Congress last Thursday, which struck Malaysia off the list of countries receiving military grants.

Malaysia was reportedly taken off the list for its refusal to grant asylum to Vietnamese refugees. Besides Malaysia, Liberia, Somalia and Zaire were also deprived of military grants, in their case for "blatant abuse of human rights".

According to news reports, the amendment is expected to be sent to President

George Bush today, and it is highly unlikely that he will veto the entire Act.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said Malaysia's refusal to grant asylum to Vietnamese refugees is to safeguard its interest, "just as what the US did before in refusing to allow refugees from Mexico and Haiti to enter the US".

"Because their country is strong and we are weak, they can hit us on our head. What can we do, we are only a small country," he said, adding that in this case it is clearly demonstrated that "might is right".

Malaysia, according to Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir, is sad that "the US could not decide promptly and decisively when other countries embarked on more serious crimes, such as the killing of the 21 Palestinians".

Malaysia, he said, will not do anything to get back the military grant, adding that it does not need the money anyway. However, Malaysia will lose expertise, he said.