

# ***POLICY STAYS DESPITE U.S. MOVE ON AID: PM***

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad welcomed today a move by the United States to restore military aid but said this would not change Malaysia's policy on the Vietnamese boat people.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia would continue to refuse first asylum to Vietnamese boat people, adding that this was no different from the US practice of deporting

those who entered the country illegally.

"If they (Vietnamese boat people) land here, we will follow the usual practice of the United States, that is, to turn away those who enter the United States without permission," he told newsmen after launching the Malaysian Business Council.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was aware that the United States had prevented Haitians from

landing on its shores.

Similarly, he said, Mexicans were prevented from entering the United States.

"We believe that if the Americans can do this, we also have the right to do the same," he said.

It was reported yesterday that the Bush administration will ask Congress next month to reinstate the US\$1.1 million (\$3 million) grant withdrawn last year on a legis-

lative amendment pushed through by Senator Mark Hatfield.

The amendment removed Malaysia from the US International Military Education and Training Programme and with it, the military assistance. The move followed Malaysia's policy to stop accepting the Vietnamese boat people, many of whom are believed to be economic refugees.

Meanwhile, the US

State Department clarified today that its request to Congress to reinstate military aid to Malaysia was conditional upon a change in Malaysia's policy of granting first asylum to the boat people.

"We are still concerned that Malaysia's policy is not to accept boat people. There are continuing reports of push-offs," *Bernama* quoted a State Department spokesman as saying in Washington.