

Dr M: No need for strong US presence

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From Balan Moses

NEW YORK, Thurs. — The United States does not need a strong military presence in the Philippines following the cessation of acts of aggression in the region, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

The Prime Minister said most countries were not keen on military adventures due to the cost in terms of money and lives.

"For example, look at the Vietnamese -experience in Cambodia. They lost money as well as a lot of people in the fighting. Today, Cambodia is completely out of Vietnam's orbit," he said in a reply to a question following his address at the inaugural meeting of the Malaysia-united States Consultative Group.

The questioner wanted to know if the Prime Minister felt that the American presence at Subic Bay in the Philippines was still necessary.

The Prime Minister said China was another example of a country that had given up ideas of conquest.

"China today is trying to rebuild its economy. It has given up the idea it should conquer the countries of Southeast Asia," he said.

In fact, the idea of conquest and colonisation is generally considered out of date as people have realised it is a burden on the economy.

In a lighter vein, he said countries with conquest in mind should emulate the Japanese by waging an economic war against others.

To a question on whether he felt there were economic opportunities in Vietnam for Malaysia, he said Malaysia was prepared to help rehabilitate the country and direct it towards a market economy.

"There is good potential for economic opportunities in Vietnam for Malaysia. Vietnam is quite isolated at the moment. Once they see how Southeast Asian countries have prospered as a result of the free market system, they will come to us for help."

Vietnam is interested in Malaysia's assistance to help rebuild its banking system besides resuscitating the rubber industry and developing its petroleum and gas industries.