

Mahathir: No rift in ties with US

S - 8 MAY 1992

By PAUL GABRIEL

ALOR STAR: There is no rift in relations between Malaysia and the United States as far as Malaysia is concerned, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

He said it was up to US leaders to decide whether they wanted to visit Malaysia during their Asian trips.

President George Bush and Defence Secretary Dick Cheney came as far as Singapore but did not include Malaysia in their recent trips.

"They (Bush and Cheney) did not visit us and we do not know why. As far as we are concerned, relations are not sour," Dr Mahathir said after opening an Ex-Services Association seminar at the Universiti Utara Malaysia campus in Sintok.

The Prime Minister was asked to comment on a report in a recent issue of *Far Eastern Economic Review* that Malaysian officials were worried about

a rift in US-Malaysia ties.

The report stated that Dr Mahathir was "unavailable" to take a call from Bush while the US President was in Singapore in January, and that a senior Pentagon official's visit had to be cancelled at the last moment because Malaysian officials were "unavailable" to see him.

Dr Mahathir confirmed he was not able to take Bush's telephone call because it was a Sunday and he was not in his office.

Elaborating on relations with the United States, the Prime Minister said Malaysia reserved the right to voice its opinion on any matter.

He said Malaysia was entitled to criticise matters and actions it considered wrong, just as others claimed the right to do so.

"It does not mean that if we criticise, we want to be enemies. Our policy is clear and fair . . . criticise a friend if there's a wrong and commend even a foe, if he does the right thing," he said.