

Dr M: US must practise what it preaches

By Azmi M. Anshar and Manan Osman

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. — United States President-elect Bill Clinton should attend to human rights and environmental issues in his country before exporting such standards to other countries, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"You cannot preach something you do not practise. We hope there is no attempt to export their ideas and standards to other people," the Prime Minister told reporters after launching former Welfare Services Minister Tan Sri Aishah Ghani's memoirs, *Aishah Ghani, Memoir Seorang Pejuang*, at the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (DBP) here.

Congratulating Clinton on his victory over George Bush, Dr Mahathir said the presidential election campaign concentrated on domestic issues which were of interest to Malaysians.

"But of greater interest would be the winner's foreign policy . . . and we know very little. We have to wait until we know more of him before we can comment," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Bush lost because he concentrated too much on foreign affairs and because of the role played by (former Secretary of State and later campaign chairman) James Baker.

He felt Bush did not give sufficient attention to domestic matters, including the economy.

"So I would say that one of the major reasons why Bush lost is that he had Baker with him. I think it is a good thing now that Baker is out of the picture," he said.

Asked if Clinton, should change the negative US stand to the East Asia Economic Caucus, Dr Mahathir said he hoped the new leaders would not be "so frightened" of a simple forum of East Asian countries.

"We are not going to be a trade bloc so we hope the new leadership would look on this proposal with less emotion," he said.

When asked to comment on the statement by US Ambassador to Malaysia John Wolf that the tone and substance of United States economic, democratic and security policies in the region may change with the presidential transition, Dr Mahathir said:

"I like to keep an open mind. So we will watch first. I think the ambassador is just making his own assessment, like other people."

On the detention of 24 Malaysians in Boston, Dr Ma-

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hathir said the incident would affect the US image abroad because although the Malaysian tourists might have done something wrong, the manner in which they were treated was something that would not be tolerated here.

"We do not treat foreigners, especially tourists, that way, even if they are in the wrong. We have one million foreigners who have come here illegally but we have not treated them that way," he said.

Asked whether a strong protest would be lodged with the US, he said the government would first study the basis of the protest.

On the DAP's rejection of the Penang Government's Bill to increase the number of state constituencies, Dr Mahathir said the DAP, despite its claims about democracy, had deprived Penang voters of the right to greater representation in the State Assembly.

By rejecting the move, he said the number of elected representatives was still the same while the voter population had increased.

"I feel the DAP's action is not democratic but it is not surprising that the DAP is taking this attitude because in their party, the voice of members is not like in Umno or other political parties.

"They practise the elite system . . . the cadre system

where leaders choose leaders and the leaders will remain. So it is clear that the DAP's hold on democracy is extremely weak and that is why they do not want voters to get a bigger voice."

On Semangat 46 president Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah's call to dissolve the Penang Government, Dr Mahathir said the suggestion would only be implemented if the Opposition was in power.

On DAP secretary-general and Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang's call for a referendum, he said: "This is the view of people who do not have power wanting to take the power of those in power — so they make such suggestions.

"If they are the govern-

ment, they would not even do it within their party. So do not talk about a referendum."

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said Malaysia was confident that relations with the US would be further enhanced under the Clinton administration.

Malaysia hoped that the existing cordia relations between the two countries would greatly improve and that there would be a better understanding of regional issues.

"We hope that there will be a better understanding of the problems we encounter from time to time," he told reporters at Parliament House.