

American navy move follows

plan
says Dr M

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — The transfer of US naval logistics facilities from the Philippines to Singapore has not exceeded what Singapore had informed Malaysia and other Asean partners. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said moving staff and personnel from Subic Bay to Singapore was not tantamount to creating a US base on the island.

He said from what Malaysia had been informed, the move was to provide a repair and servicing facility for ships and equipment and to ensure there were necessary personnel to man it.

Dr Mahathir was speaking to reporters after opening the second executive programme on project appraisal and risk analysis management at Bank Negara here.

The programme is organised by the Harvard Club of Malaysia, Institute of Bankers, Malaysia and the Harvard Institute of International Development.

Singapore signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the US in November 1990 granting the superpower expanded use of facilities for its navy and air force.

It also allowed six US F-16 jet fighters to use bases in Singapore with a permanent military contingent of 95 personnel.

Singapore Prime Minister Goh &ok Tong had said his country welcomed the security presence of Americans so long as this was within the 1996 MOU.

On the East Asia Economic Caucus and the opposition expressed by President George Bush during his current Asia-Pacific visit, Dr Mahathir said it showed the United States did not respect the right of other countries.

He said the US might resort to taking other actions and if it did, then it would mean violating the concept of freedom and independence for all nations.

He felt that the US should not force other countries to back its decision not to support the EAEC.

President Bush has said the United States endorsed free trade and was not in favour of nor did it encourage the division of the world into trading blocs.

Yesterday, Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Haji Ahmad Badawi said the formation of the EAEC should be decided solely by East Asian countries.

He also denied that the EAEC would be a trade bloc. As proposer of the idea, Malaysia merely wanted to see that protectionism and trade barriers were not imposed by rich nations.