

Dr M hits out at US stand on EAEC

KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has hit out at the United States for using its influence to force other countries into rejecting the East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC).

The Prime Minister said while it was the prerogative of the United States to oppose the formation of the EAEC, it should not force other countries into rejecting it.

"The United States has advocated what it termed as human rights, freedom and independence and (what it is doing now) is a disregard of the rights of other countries to make their own decisions," he said.

Dr Mahathir also expressed concern that Washington might resort

to some form of action to negate Malaysia's effort in forming the EAEC.

"The United States has made a verbal stand against the EAEC and if we go ahead with it, they might take some form of action against the EAEC," he added after opening the second Executive Programme on project Appraisal and Risk Analysis Management at the Bank Negara.

He said Malaysia would raise the issue at the Asean Summit in Singapore this month.

He was commenting on President George Bush's statement in Singapore that he was not in favour of the setting up of the EAEC for fear that it might divide the world into exclusive trade blocs.

Mr Bush, who had also been in Japan on his tour of Asia, had said the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation could be used in an extended role for the EAEC.

On the relocation of the US military logistics command from the Philippines to Singapore, Dr Mahathir said Singapore had pledged it would not be a military base in the republic.

"As far as we know, it will not be a military base like the Clark air base or the Subic Bay naval base in the Philippines.

"Singapore will only be used by the United States for the repair, service and maintenance of aircraft and navy fleet," he said.

He said there was no necessity to have a mili-

tary base in the Asean region which had been propagating the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality concept.

As far as Malaysia is concerned, Singapore has been consistent with its promise not to allow the setting up of an American military base, he added.

Primary Industries Minister Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik, meanwhile, said the United States' rejection of the EAEC was uncalled for.

"They did not even discuss it and this is mostly unfair. More so, when it comes from a country which claims to practise free trade," he added after meeting the Danish Minister of Environment Dr Per Stig Moeller.

"It only goes to show

the Bush administration is practising double standards when it comes to free trade policy," he said.

Dr Lim also criticised the United States for its export enhancement programmes which he said was aimed at weakening exports from the Third World.

The United States should review its farm subsidy if it was sincere in promoting free trade policies.

Dr Lim also said steps were being taken to further exploit the use of palm oil in farm machinery and marine diesel engines.