

Dr Mahathir hopes US will not

Nst 18 MAY 2002

By Chok Suat Ling
and Deborah Loh
news@nstp.com.my

SEPANG, Fri. Describing his visit to the United States as a success, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he hoped the improved ties between both countries will result in

the US not interfering in Malaysia's internal affairs.

He said just as Malaysia did not like to interfere in the affairs of other countries, the US should also not interfere in Malaysia's affairs.

Speaking to reporters at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport upon his return from a three-day working visit to the US, Dr Ma-

hathir said he did not hope for anything from his visit except to foster good relations with the US.

Dr Mahathir was asked whether improved relations between the two countries would mean the US under the helm of President George W. Bush would not interfere in Malaysia's internal affairs as the previous administration had done.

interfere in Malaysia's internal affairs

Elaborating on his visit, Dr Mahathir said he managed to deliver his message and views across and they were accepted by the US Government

The Prime Minister said it appeared that Malaysia's stand on issues was not in conflict with that of the United States.

"I had the opportunity to meet

with senior members of the US Government, (the country's) influential personalities, President Bush. I was able to deliver my message and it was listened to and not rejected. In that sense, it (the visit) was a success."

He said he managed to explain to Bush Malaysia's stand on terrorism, the situation in the region,

and international problems.

"Bush was willing to listen and agreed with my views especially on the Palestinian issue."

The US Government, said Dr Mahathir, supported and would stand firmly by the establishment of a Palestinian state, even though this

□ TURN TO BACK PAGE, COL 1

Bush lauds Malaysia's role in Myanmar

Nst 18 HAY 2002

□ FROM PAGE ONE

was strenuously opposed by the Israeli Likud Party.

"This is a development which will contribute towards resolving the Middle East conflict."

Bush also congratulated Malaysia for its role in Myanmar, said Dr Mahathir.

United Nations special envoy for Myanmar Tan Sri Razali Ismail brokered the release of Myanmar democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi recently.

On specific issues discussed, Dr Mahathir said among them were the purchase of new fighter jets.

The Prime Minister had earlier said Malaysia was interested in buying Super Hornet FA-18E/F fighter jets from the US.

"We had said we wanted to buy fighter jets and the latest model is with them.

"They say they have not approved the purchase of the jets by any country.

"We plan to trade in our old fighter jets with this new jet which is superior and a little bigger than the old jets."

He also said US Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan had discussed Islamic banking with Bank Negara Governor Tan Sri Zeti Akhtar Aziz.

He said Greenspan had asked about Islamic bonds and was told that Malaysia had created many

other Islamic banking products which were well-accepted by Muslims.

"It was clear he (Greenspan) did not have much information about Islamic banking and there was much we told him.

"But the Americans are giving more attention to their own banking system and they are not confident with the Islamic banking system."

Dr Mahathir also urged Malaysian businessman to promote local products in the US as the country had huge market potential.

He said his visit there was not intended to attract more US investments here.

Instead, he realised that Malaysia had not taken enough initiative in promoting its goods and services there.

To provide a place for local goods to be exhibited, the Malaysian embassy in Washington D.C. would reserve a space on its premises for Malaysian products to be displayed, Dr Mahathir said.

Dr Mahathir said there was a market not just for electronic goods, but many other products, including furniture.

"There is a big furniture market in the US."

On terrorism, the Prime Minister said Malaysia was always willing to exchange information on efforts to fight terrorism.

"While we are willing to ex-

change information, it does not mean that when something becomes our country's business we will hand it to others."

He dismissed the need for the presence of the US military in the region.

He said Malaysia's stand has always been that it was unnecessary for the US military to be stationed in the region to safeguard East Asia.

"This has always been our stand and it has not changed.

"We do not see any threat to Asia."

The Prime Minister said when the views of the country on international issues were accepted by many parties, including the West and other Islamic countries, it was a "morale booster" for Malaysia.

"We are not doing this for our own interests. We believe in justice for all parties.

"Our stand is to resolve problems so that we can lessen violence in the world."

On US perception of Iraq, Dr Mahathir said it (the US) wanted to topple President Saddam Hussein's Government.

"We know they want to topple Saddam Hussein but we hope that in that process, Iraqi citizens will not become the victims.

"As we know it is the Iraqi people who are the victims while Saddam Hussein is not even suffering one bit."