

Dr M: US is getting more isolated

BY LIM CHYE KRIM
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DAVOS (Switzerland): The United States is getting more isolated, with criticisms against its policies mounting, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

He said that apart from Australia, "which is very fervently with the US, as its deputy sheriff," there was nobody else.

Even in the United States, its policies were getting the support of perhaps only half the people, he said at a meeting with foreign media leaders here on the sidelines of the 33rd annual meeting of the World Economic Forum yesterday.

Pointing out that he was neither anti nor pro-America, he said the United States was now more alone than during the Vietnam war.

"When the US sent troops to Vietnam, they had a lot of support but now no one sees any benefit of an attack on Iraq," he said.

To a question on what he would do if he were the US president – since he was always critical of US policies – Dr Mahathir said he would do what he did in Malaysia – to look at all options to deal with situations, including the terrorism issue, he told the foreign media.

He explained to them how Malaysia dealt with the communists in the past, by military means as well as winning over the hearts and minds of the people.

"If I were the US president, I would study the reasons why someone would want to crash himself into a tall building and die in that horrible fashion.

"How many of us are prepared to do that (die in that kind of suicide attack)?" he asked, adding that he was not justifying terrorism.

He said even if the United States were to win its war against Iraq and stay on after its victory, the Americans would overstay their welcome after a while as had happened in other countries previously.

On what advice he would give US President George W. Bush, Dr Mahathir doubted the president would listen to him.

He also said the United States was practising double standards in its treatment of Iraq and North Korea.

Dr Mahathir said it was futile to follow the present course, stressing that war with Iraq was not justified.

Speaking to Malaysian journalists after attending the WEF meeting yesterday, he said Malaysia would continue to be vocal and speak out against things it felt were wrong.

"When we believe something is not right, we must speak out, keep on pressing," he said, when asked to comment on the US' stubborn stand on Iraq and other issues.

He said the US not only still did not accept Malaysia's position on terrorism, it did not accept that of others too.

"When I am asked whether the views of people towards America have become worse, I am forced to explain that now, other than Britain and Australia, no others support the United States."

Besides attending the WEF meeting, Dr Mahathir, who arrived here on Thursday, also had bilateral discussions with his counterparts from Mongolia, Nambar Enkhbayar, and Ukraine, Victor Yanukovych, as well as Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

He said he found the WEF relevant as it allowed views to be aired by various sectors from several countries on world affairs and other matters.

In this regard, he said that while the United States did not care for world opinion, at least it would not go to war on the premise that it was fighting in the interest of the world.