

No rebuke from Bush, says Mahathir

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BANGKOK: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday rejected a claim by the White House that he was rebuked by US President George W. Bush over his controversial statement that Jews rule the world.

White House spokesman Scott McClellan had told reporters Bush pulled Mahathir aside during talks among Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) leaders here to rebuke him for the statement.

But Mahathir dismissed the claim at a media conference at the end of the meeting.

"I do not know how people came to this conclusion. He (Bush) did pull me aside to explain to me why he had to

make a strong statement against me," Mahathir said.

"I told him I understand."

At last week's summit of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in Malaysia, Mahathir had said: "The Europeans killed six million Jews out of 12 million. But today the Jews rule this world by proxy."

The outspoken leader, whose comments drew global condemnation and outrage from Western nations, had added that 1.3 billion Muslims could not be defeated by a few million Jews.

When a journalist reminded Mahathir it was Bush's spokesman who had made the claim during a media briefing on Monday, the prime

minister said spokesman McClellan should clarify the matter with the president.

"Certainly, he (Bush) did not rebuke me. All he told me was: I regret having to use strong words against you.

"I do not know if his assistant heard it or not but I will ask him to ask President Bush again exactly what he did say.

"Unless my hearing is very bad. But it is still very good, I can hear very well. He did not rebuke me at all and after that, we were walking practically hand-in-hand."

Mahathir also said on a personal basis, Bush and he "have no quarrel". - AFP