

# We don't need it

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**PUTRAJAYA:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has brushed off a US Senate decision to curb military aid to Malaysia on account of his recent remarks about Jews ruling the world by proxy.

"It doesn't make any difference to us. We don't really need that money," he said at his office yesterday.

The US Senate voted unanimously on Monday to tie the US\$1.2 million (RM4.5 million) military training aid to a report by the State Department determining whether Malaysia "supports and promote religious freedoms, including tolerance for people of the Jewish faith".

The provision was added to an US\$18 billion (RM68.4 billion) foreign aid spending bill, which the Senate is expected to approve this week. While the amount is small, aides in Washington said the move should send a message to Malaysia's government.

"They want to dictate (to) the world. We are all being run by the US Senate, it's no good having our own elections," said Mahathir, who steps down on Friday after 22 years as prime minister.

"We better elect (vote) in the US elections and we can be sure we get the right representatives," he said.

## PM brushes off US Senate vote to curb military aid

He also appeared to imply that the Senate vote was proof of his claim that Jews rule the world by proxy. "They are very annoyed about what I said about the Jews. This is their reaction, so what I say is true."

US President George Bush said he rebuked Mahathir at an Asia-Pacific summit in Bangkok a week ago, but the premier did not remember it like that. "It's the biggest lie. If he had rebuked me, I'm quite sure I would have rebuked him also," Mahathir said.

He provoked sharp criticism from Western governments and Israel this month for comments at a summit here of the Organisation of Islamic Conference leaders.

"The Europeans killed six million Jews out of 12 million. But today, the Jews rule this world by proxy," he said, receiving a standing ovation. He also condemned the use of violence and reminded Muslims to use their brains to defeat their enemies.

Some analysts believe Washington could hurt its own interests if it alienated Malaysia through this largely symbolic gesture, which still needs to win support from the House of Representatives.

"It is a model of moderate Islam," said Brad Glosserman, of the Pacific Forum CSIS think tank based in Hawaii, adding that Malaysia serves as an example for Muslim participation in government beyond Southeast Asia. And Carl Thayer, analyst at the Australian Defence College in Canberra, said undermining the military-to-military relationship, which was one of the strongest ties between the two nations, was an odd way to treat an ally in the war on terror. The US could be shooting itself in the foot when it wants cooperation," he said.

Malaysia's relations with Washington have nosedived after reaching a high point in May last year when Mahathir was welcomed at the White House by Bush to be thanked personally for his support in the war on terrorism following Sept 11, 2001.

Since then, while maintaining his strong condemnation of terrorism and detaining local Islamic militants, Mahathir has been increasingly critical of Bush's handling of the campaign. -- Reuters/AFP