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'Malaysia won't bow to Western powers'

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PUTRAJAYA, Mon. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that Malaysia will not be subservient to Western powers, even after he retires.

Allaying fears that Kuala Lumpur might kow tow to the United States or other Western powers when he is no longer the Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir said external policies and the role of upholding truth would continue.

"No, I don't think so. I have absolute faith in my successor, we will continue with the same policy, there is no problem," Dr Mahathir said when asked on the possible shift in external policies, due to unseen pressures and arm-twisting tactics of certain Western nations, when he steps down later this year.

Certain quarters have expressed doubts that Kuala Lumpur's image of being the champion of developing countries and a strong voice against Western dominance would remain after Dr Mahathir retires.

On the possibility of the US retaliating against Malaysia for Kuala Lumpur's unwavering anti-war stance before and after the invasion of Iraq, Dr Mahathir said the possibility is always there.

"They (US) have openly said that those (nations) who support will be accorded special treatment while those who didn't will be punished. These include France, Germany, Russia and others.

"I think we are also among them (those who will be punished), but I'm not sure what they (US) wants to do (to punish)."

Dr Mahathir who is also the Finance Minister was speaking at a Press conference at the ministry after chairing the 2004 Budget dialogue.

Also present was Second Finance Minister Datuk Jamaluddin Jarjis.

Asked if Malaysia was prepared to face the consequences of such retaliatory actions, Dr Mahathir said: "We will see what they want to do, then we find our way (out of it)."

On Malaysia being branded as a "hot-spot" for terror attacks after the recent terrorists attacks in Riyadh and Casablanca, Dr Mahathir said every nation was vulnerable to such attacks, including the US and Britain and other countries which are well exposed.

He said that Malaysia has taken all the possible measures to safeguard the country and its people, including foreigners.