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`We won't give in to blackmail'

Firdaus Abdullah

PUTRAJAYA, Wed. - Thanking the Bush administration for its intention to "give a chance to the new administration (of Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi) to prove itself", Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that Kuala Lumpur would continue with its current stance of not giving in to pressures and blackmail.

The Prime Minister said it was the Government's collective stance and not his individual view to stand against such arm-twisting.

"Well, thank you very much to the Bush administration but we run this country in our own interest, in our own way. ...we do things our own way ...others cannot interfere or threaten us that way.

"This is the Government's stand. This morning the Cabinet decided that this is the stand of the Government," Dr Mahathir said.

He was speaking to the media after witnessing the Technology Co-operation Agreement signing between Proton and Iran's Automotive Industry Development Company (AIDCO) at the Prime Minister's Department here.

On Monday the US Senate voted to block a RM4.5 million military training aid to Kuala Lumpur on grounds that religious freedom in Malaysia was questionable and insisted that the State Department evaluated religious freedom, including for Jews, in Malaysia before the aid could be channelled.

Responding to the condition imposed by the Senate, Dr Mahathir said on Tuesday that Malaysia was not dependent and did not require the aid or the military training from the US.