

Mutual respect vital to peace

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OUTGOING Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is proud that Malaysia is capable of safeguarding its independence even without the financial support from developed countries like the United States.

"If they want, they can keep their money. We don't need their money," he said of the US Senate's decision to restrict some aid to Malaysia because of his remarks at the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Summit recently about Jews ruling the world by proxy.

The US Senate unanimously agreed on Monday to condition US\$1.2 million (RM4.56 million) in military training aid to Malaysia on a determination by Secretary of State Colin Powell that the country supports and promotes religious freedom, including for Jews.

Speaking at the breaking of fast organised by Federal Territory Umno in Masjid Negara yesterday, Dr Mahathir said there was religious freedom in Malaysia, contrary to claims by certain quarters.

For example, the Chinese and Indians who came to Malaysia hundreds of years ago, are free to practise their respective religions, he said.

The Prime Minister also said mutual respect of one another's religion could erase suspicions and bring the people closer.

This was vital to the country's peace and progress, he said, noting that many non-Muslims also joined Muslims in the breaking of fast during the Ramadan fasting month and similarly, many Muslims visited their friends during the recent Deepavali celebrations.



Dr Mahathir breaking fast with FT Umno members