

A parting shot

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Mahathir: US can't influence the way we run this country

PUTRAJAYA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad chaired his 883rd and last weekly cabinet meeting yesterday, taking another swipe at the United States for trying to influence the government following a row over his remarks on Jews.

Responding to a decision by President George W. Bush's administration to oppose a Senate move to sanction Malaysia, he said: "Thank you very much, but we run this country in our own interest. We do things our own way and others cannot influence us or threaten us."

The Bush administration opposes a vote by the US Senate to place restrictions on a US\$1.2 million (RM4.5 million) military training assistance to Malaysia in retaliation for Mahathir's remarks on Jews made during the Organisation of Islamic Conference summit here earlier this month.

The US State Department said the administration believes Mahathir has already been adequately rebuked for his remarks and that his successor deserves a chance "to take a different stance" before being punished financially.

But Mahathir told a news briefing the cabinet shares his views.

Asked if there was government consensus over his comments that the Jews rule the world by proxy, he said: "It is a government stand. This morning the cabinet decided this is the stand of the government."

Mahathir, who retires tomorrow after 22 years in office, was also asked about his feelings on chairing his last cabinet meeting.

"It is a bit sad. I said goodbye to all of them (cabinet colleagues). It is the last one that you chair, so I suppose it is very significant for me and also significant for the others who

have been working with me," he said.

Mahathir said that he advised the ministers to give his successor, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, all the support which they had shown him.

"I hope they will work with the new leadership so that we can further progress," he said.

On whether he would miss taking out his notebook to jot down things that need attention, Mahathir replied: "I think it is a custom that has passed on to the others. So they all have their own notebooks now and I am quite sure it will be useful for them."

Mahathir will address parliament for the last time today.

Abdullah will be sworn in before the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin, at Istana Negara at 5pm tomorrow.

Mahathir's cabinet colleagues shower accolades on him PAGE 2



Mahathir and his successor Abdullah before the start of yesterday's weekly cabinet meeting in Putrajaya. It was the 883rd and last meeting chaired by Mahathir, who steps down tomorrow after 22 years at the helm. Report page 2.