

# US visa ruling biased, says KL

SUN 12 NOV 2001

## PM regrets Washington still focusing on Muslims and Islamic nations

**KUALA LUMPUR, Sun: Malaysia hit out today at US moves to impose entry restrictions on Muslim men from Malaysia and 24 other Islamic countries, saying it is discrimination.**

The prime minister expressed his disappointment that Washington continues to focus attention on Muslims and Islamic countries in its anti-terrorism fight.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said it is known that non-Muslim terrorists also exist, although their target of violence may not be the United States.

Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi says the move smacks of discrimination "in all its aspects".

The new rule, which comes into effect next week, requires all Muslim males aged 16 to 45 from the 25 countries wishing to enter the United States to fill up a questionnaire asking if they had any past military experience, weapons training experience, plus previous travel itineraries.

Applicants would then

have to wait 20 days for their visa, while a Washington terrorist task force scrutinises their questionnaire.

Apart from Malaysia, the others in the list are Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Somalia, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

Speaking in Singapore at the end of a one-day visit, Abdullah said he considers "wild and arbitrary" the US assumption that Muslim males between the ages of 16 and 45 from the Islamic countries could be terrorists.

"The possibility of their being terrorists is a random assumption ... a wild

## There should be exemptions: DPM

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one," Bernama quoted him as saying before returning home.

"This will certainly not be accepted by the countries that had been listed."

With the imposition of the regulation, the US campaign that it was not anti-Islam in the fight against terrorist activities, would not succeed, he said.

Abdullah said the regulation, which news agency reports said was announced by US Secretary of State Colin Powell, should provide for exemptions as many

diplomats, businessmen and students in that age group would want to go to the United States.

He said Malaysia realises that a country has the right to impose whatever visa restrictions or additional regulations on anyone applying for a visa to visit that country.

"It is their right, but in this matter, even though it is their right, it is important that the regulation be not too widely applied.

"It will be good if they give exemptions to certain people even though they may be in that particular age group," he added.