

Dr M dismayed over US visa curb

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By IZATUN SHARI

BANGI: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad expressed dismay yesterday over the US State Department imposing visa restrictions on Muslim men from Malaysia and 24 other Muslim nations in a move to tighten its immigration policies.

The Prime Minister said it seemed to appear as if the United States was slowly shifting its focus more and more on Muslims and Muslim countries.

"This is disheartening as we know that presently there are also terrorists among non-Muslims.

"We all know that the Oklahoma City bombing and the destruction of a building was the work of a non-Muslim," he told reporters after taking part in the International Endurance Ride 2001 organised by the Royal Malaysian Police and Tenaga Nasional Berhad here.

Dr Mahathir was asked to comment on a statement by US Secretary of State Colin Powell, who had said that the move would be temporary.

Other countries affected by the restrictions are Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

Under the new rules, which would come into effect next week, male Muslims aged between 16 and 45 from all these countries, including Malaysia, planning to go to the United States, would have to complete a detailed questionnaire asking if they had any past military service, whether they had any weapons training and their previ-

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Govt trying to promote equestrian events,

says Dr M

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ous travel itineraries.

They would then have to wait 20 days for their visas while a terrorist task force in Washington studied the information.

On another matter, when asked to elaborate on the Government's efforts to make the country a centre for equestrian, Dr Mahathir said: "One of our efforts is of course to lead by example. That forced me to ride although it is tough for a person of my age. If we don't start something, people won't do it."

He said government agencies were also making available facilities to promote the sport.

Dr Mahathir participated in the **Perdana Classic**, which is a race covering **20km**, from the Putrajaya horse stable unit to **Universiti Tenaga Nasional's stable**.

He led a four-member team which included **Arab-Malaysian Banking Group** chairman Tan Sri **Azman Hashim**, Datuk Kok Onn and **Lai Kai Weng**.

The team won second place with a total time of five hours, 24 minutes and 14 seconds, ahead of the TNB team, which registered five hours, 24 minutes and 40 seconds.

The TNB team was made up of its chairman Datuk Dr Jamaludin Jarjis, Dr Yusof **Ahmad, Mejar** (rtd) Abu Bakar Abdul Rahman and Sufian Datuk Said.

The **Perdana Classic** was won by the KL and Kota Kinabalu Mayors team, which finished the race in three hours, 52 minutes and 13 seconds. It comprised Kota Kinabalu Mayor Datuk Abdul **Ghani Rashid**, Prof Madya Tamjes Kastiran, Insp Mohamad Din Mat and **Fuad Mahmud**.