

3%

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PM confident nation will achieve better economic recovery

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia is expected to attain an economic growth of 3% in 2002, a rate which is far better compared to growth in other countries.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said this in a television interview with Bernama, which was aired by RTM and Astro last night.

"We believe that we may achieve a growth of 0.5% to 1% in 2001 and, for 2002 there is a possibility of a growth of about 3%," he said, in the annual programme **Wawancara Bernama dengan Perdana Menteri**.

The interview was conducted by Bernama editor-in-chief Jaafar Hussin and assistant editor E. Sivabalan.

Asked whether the global economic downturn following the Sept 11 terrorist attacks in the United States would affect Malaysia's Vision 2020 target of becoming a developed nation, Dr Mahathir said he felt the effects would be minimal.

He said there might be some effects but he hoped they would be confined to 2001.

He recalled that in 2000 Malaysia achieved growth of more than 8%, and had expected that it would grow in the same manner last year.

"But in view of the economic downturn in the US followed by the terrorist attacks, we could not achieve our targets. But we still think it is not bad," he added.

On the unemployment rate after the economic downswing, Dr Mahathir said unemployment in the country was still low but the situation could be improved and unemployment would not be a big problem.

He said job opportunities were still abundant but the problem was that many of those who were unemployed tended to be choosy and this caused them to remain jobless.

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GROWTH

Sept 11 affected

tourism industry,

says Dr M

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Dr Mahathir said the Sept 11 attacks had affected foreign tourist traffic into Malaysia.

"If not for the Sept 11 attacks, we are confident that we would have attracted more than a million tourists each month.

"This is a big figure because for the whole of 2000, the total number of tourists to Malaysia was just 10 million and this meant that there were fewer than a million tourists each month," he said.

The Prime Minister said 12.5 million tourists were expected to have visited Malaysia in 2001.

This high level of tourist arrivals was from January until the Sept 1 attacks, he said.

"There was a sharp drop in September. October saw low figures with only 700,000 tourists.

"But the earlier months saw very high figures and this means there would have been more than 12 million tourist arrivals for 2001," he said.