

# Don't blame us, says PM

SUN 20 JAN 2002

## 'US and not Malaysia the launch pad for Sept 11 attacks'

**KUALA LUMPUR, Mon: All the planning and training for the Sept 11 attacks on the United States were done in that country, not Malaysia, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.**

He denied any Malaysian connection in the attack which destroyed the twin towers of the US World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon building in Washington DC.

"The launch pad is actually in America because these people were training in America all the time," he told reporters after officiating at the Finance Ministry's Quality Day and Meet-the-Clients programme at the Jalan Duta government office complex.

"And then, they planned in America how to hijack American planes, at what time, which planes, which buildings. All that is done in America, it's not done in Malaysia."

Mahathir was asked to comment on a report in the Feb 4 edition of *Newsweek*, which said Malaysia was "a primary operational launch pad for the Sept 11 attacks". The report cited secret Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) data.

He said the alleged attackers travelled all over the world, including Switzerland, where they should have been arrested, and Malaysia where they came as tourists.

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## Show evidence conspiracy done in Malaysia, says PM

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"They came here as tourists. If we were to arrest every Arab tourist here, then nobody will ever come to Malaysia," he said.

However, he said, there are Malaysians trained in Afghanistan and Pakistan who come back with the intention to destabilise the country, create racial and religious tensions and plan to build a government through terrorism.

According to the *Newsweek* report, a former Malaysian army officer, Yazid Sufaat, had held a meeting with top associates of Osama bin Laden in his Kuala Lumpur condominium in January 2000.

He was said to have received orders, from an Indonesian cleric with ties to Al Qaeda, to conduct the meeting to plan the US attack.

To this, Mahathir said: "Let's see the evidence. It's very easy to say that it is done, but did they do it in Malaysia, did they plan everything? I doubt it. It's too sophisticated an operation."

He said that at the time, the government did not have any

knowledge about the matter and, therefore, could not take any action against them.

"We know nothing. When we found out who they are and what they're planning, we took action and arrested nearly all of them," he said referring to the Kumpulan Militan Malaysia members.

Asked whether there are plans to act against the magazine, he said the government will look at what can be done.

"This is the so-called freedom of the press but sometimes this freedom is abused by these people for their own agenda. We know they don't like Malaysia for some reason or other and no matter what we do, they're going to say bad things about us."

Mahathir said despite their claims that the local press is under government control, the *Asian Wall Street Journal* and *Herald Tribune* are printed here and they say nasty things about Malaysia.

"But we have never stopped it. You see, these newspapers have got no moral sense at all and are bent on telling lies," he said.

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