

Rais: Legal action may be taken against magazines over claims

Nst - 1 FEB 2002

SHAH ALAM, Thurs. Malaysia is considering taking legal action against *Newsweek* and other international magazines if they are unable to substantiate their claims that Malaysia is a source for terrorist-related activities.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim said today the country could no longer condone such allegations.

"If they do not come out with the evidence, we will have to use our two-prong approach of civil system or consider the possibility of underpinning them under the Printing Presses and Publications Act. "I have already collated various articles churned out by these magazines and have requested the Attorney-General's Chambers to

come up with a report.

"This is not something new ... Singapore is doing it and we are doing it (now)."

He stressed that he was not indicating the Government would ban the magazines. Rais was speaking to reporters after opening an intellectual discourse entitled "Global Ethics and Universal Challenges" jointly organised by students of the Universiti Teknologi Mara's Information Studies Faculty and the Utusan Group.

The Jan 27 edition of *Newsweek* had said that Malaysia was a primary operational launch pad for the attacks on New York and Washington, citing secret Federal Bureau of Investigations data.

The report said US intelligence

sources believed a former Malaysian army captain, Yazid Sufaat, who was a member of the extremist group Jemaah Islamiah, helped develop a support network for chief terrorist suspect Osama bin Laden in Malaysia and Southeast Asia.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had refuted the allegation, pointing that the launch pad was actually in the US as the terrorists were trained there.

Rais said he expected the A-G's Chambers to submit its report in two weeks. He would later announce the decision through the Home Ministry on whether any legal action would be initiated.

"We don't mind international magazines being critical but their reports must be based on facts."