

Malaysia not to blame: FBI chief

It is not a launch pad for terrorists involved in Sept 11 attacks

SUN, 15 MAR 2002

By R.S. Kumar

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs: Malaysia is not a launch pad for terrorists involved in the Sept 11 attacks in New York and Washington, US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) director Robert Mueller III said here today.

He said Malaysia cannot be branded as such just because the meeting of suspected terrorists had reportedly taken place here last year.

"Similar meetings had also occurred in Germany and a number of other countries. It is an incorrect quote," he told reporters after meeting Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Norian Mai at the federal police headquarters in Bukit Aman.

Mueller said he and Norian had an understanding that a meeting or string of meetings among terrorists might have been held in Malaysia as in Germany or in other countries.

He declined comment when asked about the possibility of the FBI requesting the extradition of Yazid Sufaat, a Malaysian businessman and former army captain.

"I did not come here with any (extradition) papers," he said, but added that the US would request the extradition of suspects if that was the appropriate thing to do.

Yazid was alleged to have hosted a meeting in his Kuala Lumpur condominium with two men, who crashed a Boeing into the Pentagon in Washington.

The Malaysian authorities have detained him and 12 others for allegedly plotting to overthrow the government by violent means.

Mueller also reiterated the US's stand that its war against global terrorism was not targeted at certain religion or culture.

"We are not against the Muslims," he said, noting that there is a substantial number of Arab-Americans as well as Malaysian communities residing in the

the United States.

The FBI director disclosed that since Sept 11, his office has opened 325 investigations of assaults on American-Muslims while the state's local authorities have begun prosecution against 85 individuals for committing crime on these communities.

On the purpose of his Asia-Pacific trip, Mueller said it was to coordinate future efforts to combat terrorism and establishing personal relationship with various law enforcement agencies in the region.

He said the fight against terrorism should not be a responsibility of just one country or one agency but the global community.

On the cooperation between the FBI and the Malaysian police, he said both

agencies have enjoyed close ties even before the Sept 11 attacks.

"Over the years, the FBI has had a close relationship with the Royal Malaysian Police ... a very cooperative relationship and since Sept 11, that (relationship) has grown," he said. He also thanked Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for expressing sympathy for the victims of the Sept 11 attacks.

Norian said he and Mueller had the opportunity to exchange views and discuss ways to enhance cooperation especially on issues related to the Sept 11 attacks.

The discussions also covered the possibility of the Malaysian police seeking the FBI's assistance in the field of scientific investigation.