

Malaysia is safe: PM

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KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia is a safe country and members of the international business community, including those from the United States and Canada know it.

They also know that it is even safer than their own countries, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

The prime minister said that the fact was that several terrorist incidents had occurred not in Malaysia but in the western countries.

"The attacks, whether by crashing into buildings or by spreading anthrax, are in their countries. It's all done there, so it's dangerous there. There's no danger in Malaysia," he said after opening the Bio Malaysia 2002 international symposium and exhibition on bio-technology here yesterday.

He was responding to questions from reporters on the moves by the US and Canada to impose stringent immigration rules on visitors to the two countries, including Malaysians.

Mahathir said there was already a general anti-Muslim hysteria because of the actions of a few people.

No thanks to those few, he said, the whole Muslim world seemed to have been labelled in a negative manner.

This has led to stringent checks being carried out particularly on Muslim visitors to ensure that they were not terrorists.

"It is unfortunate, of course, that this stand is taken but it is their country," he said.

Asked if he was upset about the whole thing, Mahathir said: "Of course

I am upset. I am not a thief. I am not a terrorist."

He also recounted an incident in New York involving an American official while he was en route to Washington during a recent visit to the US.

"When I arrived in New York en route to Washington, the official who boarded the jet said harshly that no one was to move until we had been checked.

"They can check if they want to but there's no need to be so harsh," Bernama quoted Mahathir as saying.

He also commented on a report that Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi had to take off his shoes for security checks in the US.

This, he said, showed that the US authorities did not care at all that a person was a leader of a foreign country.