

Early steps taken against terrorism

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NEW DELHI: Malaysia has taken early steps to fight terrorism in its efforts to make the country safe and stable, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

He said Malaysia had a reputation and history for handling security problems effectively and had taken measures to eliminate the possibility of terrorist attacks.

"Time will show to the region that Malaysia is a safe and stable country," he told a press conference here at the end of his two-day visit to India yesterday.

Dr Mahathir, however, admitted that the recent bombings in Indonesia and the Philippines would affect Southeast Asia.

He said no one could determine when the terrorists would stage their next attack,

adding that even Malaysia might be subjected to the same kind of attacks.

Asked whether foreign investors would stay away from the region in the wake of such incidents and negative press reports, Dr Mahathir said direct foreign investments to the region had reduced generally.

Malaysia, he said, would have to depend more on domestic investments, point-

ing out that steps had been taken.

To a question that a Malaysian had been implicated in the Bali bombing, he said investigations had showed that the man was an Indonesian with Malaysian permanent resident status who had since returned to Indonesia.

He said it was up to the Indonesian authorities to act against him but if he returned to Malaysia, he would be

arrested.

Dr Mahathir said terrorism would certainly affect every Asean nation and that the consensus was that the problem must be handled collectively.

He said the level of co-operation and perception of terrorism might differ but "terrorism respects no boundaries" and a country said to be least involved, might be attacked.

"Bali was considered the most peaceful part of

Indonesia, yet they chose Bali," he said.

On the threat of war by the United States against Iraq, Dr Mahathir reiterated that the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) was against any form of unilateral action in the management of international problem.

He said the OIC hoped to formulate a common stand on the issue during its summit in Kuala Lumpur in October.