

KL upset with listing on danger list: PM

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KUALA LUMPUR: The government is disappointed with certain countries for listing Malaysia on top of their "danger threat" advisory issued to travellers, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

There were also countries which have cancelled international programmes that were scheduled to be held in Malaysia, he said.

"Such action can affect tourist arrivals and the entry of foreign investment," he said in his message in conjunction with Budget 2003, tabled in the Dewan Negara by Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Dr Shafie Mohd Salleh yesterday.

Mahathir said unfounded allegations and the move to link Malaysia and the Barisan Nasional to the Al Qaeda terrorist group was the work of

mischievous people who wish to tarnish the image and dignity of this country.

"They are uneasy over the success, prosperity and peace we have achieved so far," he said.

Mahathir, who is also the finance minister, said Malaysia stands firmly against terrorism and had acted quickly to arrest the influence of certain groups which were a threat to public order and attempted to topple the elected government through the use of force.

At the international stage, Malaysia has co-sponsored the resolution at the United Nations against terrorism and took the initiative to hold a forum to counter terrorist activities.

The prime minister said Kuala Lumpur has also agreed to Washington's pro-

posal to set up a regional training centre to counter terrorism in Malaysia.

Mahathir said many events such as the Bali bombings in Indonesia, the unrest in the Philippines and Pakistan, and the hostage crisis in Moscow have threaten the stability of the world.

He said the possibility of a US attack on Iraq could have adverse consequences on the economy and increase the tension between Muslims and non-Muslims in the countries concerned, including Malaysia.

The uncertainty overseas has influenced world economic growth, which was expected to expand only at 2.8% this year compared to 2.2% last year.

"As a country with an open economy, Malaysia is not exempted from the effects of

external developments," he said.

However, he said that with the measures implemented by the government so far, economic recovery was expected to be stronger with the gross domestic product this year increasing from 1.1% in the first quarter to 3.8% in the second quarter, and performing even better in the third quarter.

Mahathir said he held in high esteem the solid support the people has given the government and the contributions from the private sector which has worked hard to ensure economic growth.

"I am confident that with the grace of almighty Allah, we can build an even stronger and more progressive Malaysia with peace and dignity, respected by the international community," he said.