

01 OCT 2002  
Mahathir-Safe  
DANGER NOT FROM MALAYSIA, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 1 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that visitors and members of the business community, including those from the United States and Canada, know that Malaysia is a safe country and is even safer than their own countries.

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 until they topple or by spreading anthrax, are on their countries. It's all done there, so it's dangerous there. There's no danger in Malaysia," he told a media conference after opening the BioMalaysia 2002 international symposium and exhibition on biotechnology here.

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

To a question, the prime minister said there was already a general anti-Muslim hysteria because of the actions of a few people.

He said that no thanks to those few, the whole Muslim world seemed to have been labelled in a negative manner.

This, he said, 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 whether he was upset about the whole thing, Dr Mahathir said: "Of course I am upset. I am not a thief. I am not a terrorist."

The prime minister 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 my 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," Dr Mahathir said.

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

He said this showed that the US authorities did not care at all that a person was a leader of a foreign country.

-- BERNAMA  
MAM AHH JK