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PM happy with US stance (HL)

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday he was happy that the United States had discovered that Malaysia was not the "launch pad" for terrorist attacks as alleged by certain reports.

"I am very happy of course," Dr Mahathir said, responding to a statement by US Federal Bureau of Investigation director Robert S.

Mueller who had said that Malaysia was not the launch pad for terrorist attacks.

Mueller, who was in Kuala Lumpur earlier this week, said this after meeting Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Norian Mai.

Time magazine, which had reported on the matter, has apologised to the Prime Minister for its report and has invited Dr Mahathir to write an article for the magazine which it says will be prominently highlighted.

Dr Mahathir said he found the invitation attractive. "I may consider."

Several other US publications had also quoted US Government reports that Malaysia had acted as "the launch pad" for the Sept 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon.

However, Mueller said Malaysia had been co-operative with the US before and after Sept 11 in exchanging information on terrorism.

Dr Mahathir added: "He (Mueller) says what we have done (co-operating with the US on terrorism), we have done even before Sept 11, which means that we are doing these things on our own.

"We are against terrorism and if the terrorist attacks happen to other countries, we will still act against them (terrorists).

"But we are acting against potential terrorists in our country because it is in our own interests and if it coincides with the interests of the US or other countries, we have no problem with that".

Speaking at a Press conference at the end of his four-day official visit to Russia, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was against terrorism and that the world should get together to hunt down terrorists.

But Malaysia did not agree to the military action in Afghanistan as "we think the cost is too high because many civilians will be victims of such attacks".

He also reiterated that the war should not be expanded to include other countries, particularly the Muslim countries, which had been accused of assisting terrorists.

During his visit, the first official visit to Russia, Dr Mahathir held talks with President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov.
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