

21 NOV 2002
Mahathir-Warning
TELL US WHAT YOU KNOW, SAYS MAHATHIR

PUTRAJAYA, Nov 21 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight criticised a United States warning that Malaysia could be hit by Bali-style attacks, saying this is how the US is "paying" Malaysia back despite the cooperation extended by Kuala Lumpur to Washington in the fight against terrorism.

While expressing his disappointment over the matter, the prime minister urged US authorities to provide the Malaysian government with any information pertaining to possible terrorist threats to this country.

"They should tell us who, where, when so that we can take action to prevent it (any terrorist act) from happening," he told reporters after breaking fast with Finance Ministry staff here.

When asked whether American authorities were in communication with the government over the matter, Dr Mahathir, who is also Finance Minister, said: "No, not as far as I know."

The US yesterday warned that attacks similar to the deadly Oct 12 Bali bombing could take place in other Southeast Asian nations, including Malaysia.

The US State Department also reiterated its concern about the possibility of attacks by the Philippine-based Abu Sayyaf militant Muslim group in Sabah and urged US citizens visiting the islands or coastal regions of eastern Sabah to exercise "extreme caution."

The prime minister also wanted to know whether the US was prepared to take a bet on warnings of possible terrorist acts on Malaysian soil.

"If it does not happen, what are they going to do?"

"They are damaging our economy by making baseless claims," he said.

Asked whether the warning was an intention to sabotage the Malaysian economy, Dr Mahathir said: "That I don't know, but the fact is it is happening."

Malaysia has been supporting the global war against terrorism, including by agreeing to the setting up in Kuala Lumpur of a US-proposed counter-terrorism centre for Southeast Asia.

Kuala Lumpur also recently allowed Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) officials to question Internal Security Act (ISA) detainee Yazid Sufaat over the Malaysian's alleged links with terror suspect Zacarias Moussaoui.

Dr Mahathir described the US as "the most dangerous place where the action of an individual could create problems in Washington", in apparent reference to the recent sniper attacks near the American capital.

"They (the Americans themselves) are not free from terrorism, you see. They shouldn't be passing this kind of judgment on other people," he added.

-- BERNAMA
MAM MAM YBY