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Lee-terrorism

MALAYSIANS URGED TO DISPEL NOTION THAT COUNTRY IS "NOT SAFE"

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 19 (Bernama) -- Malaysians should work with the government to dispel the unfounded notion that the country is unsafe for business and tourism following several terrorist attacks worldwide since the Sept 11 incident last year, the Malaysia Crime Prevention Foundation said today.

Its vice-chairman, Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye, said the Malaysian community could not be unconcerned with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's comment yesterday that several countries had placed Malaysia high on their "danger list" of places to avoid.

Dr Mahathir made the comment in his speech delivered by Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Shafie Salleh at the tabling of Budget 2003 at the Dewan Negara.

"If these countries can have their way through the issuance of negative travel advisories, there would be dire consequences for Malaysia in terms of reduction of tourism as well as other tourism-related activities," Lee said in a statement here.

He said it was time for the entire Malaysian community to go all out to communicate with their counterparts and friends overseas that there was no truth to these negative travel advisories.

He said the Malaysian authorities were all out to assure foreign tourists that the country was safe to visit despite unsubstantiated reports in some foreign media and ill-advised calls by some developed nations against visiting Asean countries.

Lee lauded a news report in a local English daily recently which quoted foreign tourists as saying that they felt safe in Malaysia and that there was nothing to worry while in the country.

"The views expressed by the foreign tourists would go a long way to debunk those travel advisories that Malaysia, in particular, and the region are not safe," he added.

He said that it was grossly unfair for certain developed countries to single out some countries as "not safe" for their citizens and classify the Southeast Asian region as high risk.

"What is the yardstick used by these developed countries to determine which country is safe and which is unsafe. Terrorists do not recognise borders.

"Even developed countries are unsafe when their people are exposed to danger wherever they may be. The crux of the issue is how to deal with the issue of terrorism and not to identify which country is unsafe in the absence of established evidence," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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