

03 AUG 2003

Mahathir-Visa

"WE WILL NOT PROTEST," DR MAHATHIR SAYS OF NEW U.S. VISA RULING

PORT DICKSON, Aug 3 (Bernama) -- Malaysia will not protest against the U.S. ruling requiring first-time applicants of non immigrant visas, including Malaysians, to appear before its consular officer at its embassy, said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"No protest. We will not protest...as long as they don't bother us," said the Prime Minister when met after attending a Family Day of the Prime Minister's Department Welfare and Sports Body here today.

He was asked to comment on the new ruling effective Aug 1, which was announced by Senior Adviser for Strategic Planning of the Visa Services Directorate at the State Department Stephen A. Edson, who also said that being granted a visa did not guarantee entry into the United States.

Dr Mahathir said if the U.S. was suspicious of Malaysians, there was nothing Malaysia could do about it.

Asked to comment on a report of three Malaysian holiday-makers being stripped naked by the New Zealand authorities on July 19, he expressed sadness over the incident.

"I am very sad that Malaysians should be suspected like that. Malaysians generally are very responsible people.

"They (Malaysian) don't involved in such thing. Those that do that, they've already been arrested by the government," he said.

The holiday-makers from Melaka comprising cooks Liew Eng Teck, Tan Teck Hing and How Ah Wan said they wanted to spend 10 days in New Zealand but were stripped naked and forced to spend the night in a lock-up before being deported the next day.

They said they came to New Zealand only as tourists and had even bought return tickets.

--BERNAMA

APG ABG