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No adverse impact on economy, says PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is confident the bomb blast in Jakarta will not have an adverse impact on Malaysia's economy.

He said it was well known that Malaysia has taken steps against threats to national security and that it had done so even before the events of Sept 11.

"Everyone knows we have taken action (even) before Sept 11. We have been in the forefront on this matter.

"But at that time, Malaysia was criticised and people said that we were cruel for detaining suspects. They don't know which is better, to have bombs explode first before making arrests, or to arrest first before bombs explode," he told reporters after visiting Astronautic Technology (M) Sdn Bhd (ATSB) at Technology Park Malaysia.

ATSB was established to develop Malaysia's space technology capabilities. It designed, developed, operated and launched Malaysia's first micro-satellite TiungSAT-1 on Sept 26, 2000.

Dr Mahathir was asked to comment on the bombing of Jakarta's JW Marriott Hotel on Tuesday which killed 14 people and injured 150.

Indonesia's police chief has linked the deadly bombing to the Jemaah Islamiyah terror network and warned of fresh attacks by the al-Qaeda-linked group.

The Prime Minister said the Government would intensify surveillance in the country to ensure incidents like the Jakarta bomb blast did not occur in Malaysia.

"We are always on alert against any threat to the country."

He said similar incidents would continue to recur as long as the root causes of terrorism were not addressed.

Asked whether the United States' lopsided foreign policies, especially that on the Palestine-Israel conflict, had provoked terrorists to retaliate, Dr Mahathir said: "I am not saying that the US should be blamed but we feel that its approach will not help lessen the threat of terrorism."