

PM: Call for review is a bid to secede

KUALA LUMPUR: Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has likened calls for a referendum on a review of the Federation of Malaysia agreement as an attempt to secede from Malaysia.

He said there was a group which wanted to see Malaysia split into small states but they had denied having such a motive when questioned.

"But demanding a review of the federal and state government relations, demanding a referendum and having plans to take over security, isn't this an attempt to leave Malaysia?" he asked.

In an apparent reference to Sabah, Dr Mahathir warned that the country's peaceful position should not be threatened by the exploitation

of ethnicism and parochialism.

Dr Mahathir said once emotions prevailed over rationality, it would be difficult to calm a situation.

"They think the foreigners will defend their actions. They talked about how the Federal Government allegedly oppressed the Christians," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Home Minister, said these people seemed to believe the Government was afraid to act because of their foreign friends.

These self-proclaimed champions of human and minority rights from overseas, he said, no longer enjoyed any credibility or had any morals.

"They claim the right to interfere in the affairs of

any country if human rights are violated. But what have we seen in Bosnia?" he asked.

He said no effective action had been taken while thousands of Bosnian Muslims and Croatian Christians were killed.

He said the Government did not mind if the Barisan Nasional was not able to rule in all states.

"We accept the democratic decision of the people but no one or state should threaten the federation," he said.

At a press conference later, Dr Mahathir said he had often been asked during his overseas trips whether the Christians in Sabah were oppressed but the fact was that the Government had many friends who were Christians.