

Avoid extremism, says Dr Mahathir

By ROHAIZAD A. RAHIM

KUALA LUMPUR: Extremism of all forms should be avoided as it is contrary to religious beliefs, said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad. He said Malaysia was lucky as the number of extremists was relatively low and the Muslim population was made up of rational people.

The Prime Minister said it was also wrong to categorise fundamentalists as extremists.

"Extremists are those who interpret Islam their way while fundamentalists follow the fundamentals of Islam.

"I am a Muslim fundamentalist," he told a news conference after opening a national course for Islamic preachers.

On the deployment of US forces in Somalia, Dr Mahathir said he was in full support of the move.

"I fully support the action to eliminate these gangsters (warlords in Somalia) who are the cause of sufferings of the people.

"As far as I am concerned, if they (the warlords) are shot dead, I don't care....

"Their only purpose is to torture their own people just because they want to rob and go for power.

"It is better that they leave (the world)," he added.

Dr Mahathir said the Government was prepared to despatch troops to Somalia and Bosnia-Herzegovina if the United Nations made the request.