

# 'Muslim moderates contribute to Malaysia's success'

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**KUALA LUMPUR, Wed:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the "very strong support" of the majority moderates among Muslims in the country has helped make Malaysia a successful nation.

"In Malaysia, it's true, we have been more successful than other Muslim countries. This demands a strong will, steadfastness, the capacity to accept criticism, and also the support of the majority.

"I personally enjoy very strong support from the Muslim majority who are moderates in my country. And this is why I could succeed," he said in an interview with the French magazine *L'Expansion* carried in its Nov 22-Dec 5 issue.

Governments in other Muslim countries are not successful as they are unable to get popular support, and remain very poor, Mahathir said when asked whether Malaysia's success could be as a result of good luck.

"In every Muslim community, you will find a minority of people who would like to form an Islamic state and will try to stop the government from developing the country eco-

nomically."

He said instead of encouraging Muslims to study and acquire skills, the minority insists that Muslims only study religion and this prevents Muslims from catching up with lost time.

"All Muslim countries are aware of the scourge of such extremism. A big chunk of our energy, that of the Muslims, is wasted on managing these internal tensions," he said.

Citing that the big Muslim empire of the past was founded on Islamic teachings, he said if all Muslims follow strictly the teachings of Islam, they will experience much success.

"Today, certain extremists distort these teachings to serve their personal and political ambitions."

On Muslim terrorism in Malaysia, Mahathir said the country had seen the emergence of a group bent on turning Malaysia into what they call an Islamic state.

Internal extremist groups, which are unable to win power through the ballot box, try to topple the government by using militant tactics they learned in Pakistan and Afghanistan, he added.