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PM: We back hunt for terrorists but oppose war

Carolyn Hong

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said he had discussed Malaysia's stand on terrorism with Iranian President Mohammad Khatami, and they shared similar views.

He said Khatami telephoned him several days ago as he wanted the Muslim world to take a united stand on terrorism at the upcoming meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Conference foreign ministers in Qatar.

He said both Iran and Malaysia agreed that they supported efforts to hunt down terrorists but were against war.

"We think that terrorism can only be defeated by attending to the causes," he said when asked to comment on a foreign news report that Khatami has called on the Muslim world to take a united stand on terrorism in a telephone call to him (Dr Mahathir). Dr Mahathir was speaking to reporters after opening a Chief Executive Officers' Summit.

Asked about reports that the United States might attack targets in countries other than Afghanistan in its hunt for Osama bin Laden, Dr Mahathir thought it was unlikely.

He also said although Malaysia opposed terrorism, it was not against the Taliban. He added that while the Taliban were harbouring terrorists, those who attacked the US might not even be Afghans or living in Afghanistan.

Reports had indicated that they were Arabs who had lived in the US.

"Technically speaking, do you say that the US is harbouring terrorists? Certainly not," he said.