

'Do not extend war on terror'

SUN 17 MAR 2002

MOSCOW, Sat: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad warned the United States today against extending its anti-terror campaign to other countries and called for a counter-weight to offset US domination in international affairs.

"We do not think the war should be extended to include other countries, especially Muslim countries which seem to have been labelled as helping terrorists," the prime minister said on the fourth and last day of a visit to Russia where he held talks on increasing military-technical trade.

His comments came amid mounting concern in the Islamic world that after its campaign to oust the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the United States is preparing to launch strikes against Iraq because of its alleged development of weapons of mass destruction.

Russia has warned that it

would not support US strikes against Iraq the way it backed the campaign in Afghanistan.

Mahathir, who held talks with President Vladimir Putin on Thursday, said he believes "the world should together hunt down terrorists, (but Malaysia) did not quite agree to military action in Afghanistan (where) the costs were too high because civilians were the victims of the attack".

"We think we should tackle the terror problem by identifying and getting rid of the causes of terrorism," he said.

Mahathir, who will visit Germany and Poland next,

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called for a greater balance of power in international affairs, warning that "if you have too much power on one side, you are likely to topple".

Asked about the US role as the world's sole superpower, he said "there needs to be a balance of power, as there has been in Europe for ages ... because when one side dominates, there is a tendency for them to become very domineering, very inconsiderate of others".

On a possible Malaysian purchase of Russia's Sukhoi-30MK fighter plane, Mahathir said he would "certainly consider" making the purchase, though Kuala Lumpur would, if it went ahead "expect the participation of Malaysia technicians" in the subsequent modifications and testing of the aircraft.

Yesterday he attended a demonstration of the plane at the Zhukovsky aerodrome just outside Moscow, saying there was a "fair chance" of the order going through. - AFP