'Republican victory cause for concern'

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PUTRAJAYA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad expressed fear of increased confrontation between the United States and Islam as a result of the Republican victory in the US mid-term elections and the growing popularity of Islamic parties worldwide.

He said the Republican Party's victory was a vote of confidence in President George W. Bush's on-going policies, including those affecting the Muslim world.

"I suppose the election is a vote of confidence in the policies followed by President Bush," he said after launching Proton's new models – the Proton Waja 1.8 and Proton Arena 1.5 – at Dataran Putra here yesterday.

At the same time, Mahathir said, Islamic parties were also becoming popular in the Muslim world and this would only mean increased confrontation.

"Both sides are going to play up their anger and hatred to the maximum, so we are going to see a world which is not going to be very calm," he said.

On Wednesday, the Republicans took control of the US senate, retained control of the House of Representatives, and claimed a majority of the governorships.

Islamic parties that have made sudden gains in recent elections were in Pakistan, Bahrain, Morocco and Turkey, where the Justice and Development Party has been voted into power.

Mahathir said Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, who is supposed to have engineered the attack on the World Trade Center, had succeeded beyond his dreams.

"He has made the whole world frightened. Now people are frightened to do anything ... he has succeeded," he said.

"He has succeeded because we are angry. We do not know how to manage these things and we fell into his trap."

Mahathir also said that most Americans were very angry for the first time in history.