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PM: Anger, hatred will increase animosity

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PUTRAJAYA, Thurs. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said there will be growing confrontation between Muslims and the West as both sides "play up their anger and hatred to the maximum".

The Prime Minister said the world is not going to be "very calm" as a result of this animosity.

He said the Sept 11, 2001 attacks on New York and Washington, which created much anger in the US, and the resultant ways the world handled the terrorism threat had widened the gulf between Muslims and the West.

"Both sides are going to play up their anger to the maximum. So we are going to see a world which is not going to be very calm," he told reporters after launching Proton's two new car models at Dataran Putra.

Dr Mahathir made the comments when asked whether President George W. Bush would be emboldened by the US congressional election results - Republicans took control of the Senate and held onto the House of Representatives - in continuing with his policies.

While acknowledging that the results were a vote of confidence of Bush's policies, Dr Mahathir pointed out that Islamic parties were also becoming more popular, an apparent reference to recent elections in Islamic countries like Turkey and Pakistan.

"So there is going to be increasing confrontation," he said reiterating that terrorism could not be resolved with force and adding that Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden had succeeded beyond his dreams in creating a world of fear.

"He has made the whole world frightened, now people are frightened to do anything. And why has he succeeded? Because we are angry, we do not know how to manage these things, and we fall into his trap."

On reports that the Government wanted to further reduce the number of banking groups, Dr Mahathir, who is also Finance Minister, said the Government was not too rigid about it.

He said initially the plans called for six banks but 10 groups were allowed following appeals.

On Myanmar returning to democratic rule, he said the ruling military junta had to be given some time to work things out.