

# PM asks world to stop forces of extremism

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DATUK Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has stressed the importance of reducing the influence of the forces of intolerance, extremism and militancy among societies to put a stop to global terrorism.

Urging nations all over the world to devote their energies to this objective, the prime minister pointed out that "we usually recognise voices of extremism and militancy only on the other side"

"Extremism and militancy in our own body politic and society is often not regarded as such, and are instead viewed as respectable and patriotic voices who have the interests of the country at heart.

"They become an integral and important part of our political culture.

"These forces can in fact cause great harm to our interests both at home and abroad. They urge adversarial rather than collaborative approaches with other countries, they are quick to counsel the use of coercive policies without adequately exhausting other options. More dangerously, they are quick to counsel war and use of force," he said.

Speaking at the International Institute for Strategic Studies here, Abdullah said the influence of the forces of extremism and militancy can be even more pervasive in some Muslim societies. Some preach a severe and intolerant brand of Islam that rejects the pursuit of material wealth.

"They keep Muslims in a state of under-development and backwardness. They preach intolerance of other faiths and forbid fraternisation with non-Muslims.

"They deny women a place of dignity in society, and a few of them distort the teachings of Islam and the meaning of jihad.

"They incite violent attacks against not only foreign military forces that are considered to have harmed Muslims but also innocent civilians as well," he said.

He said it was incumbent on the West and the Muslim world to rein in the extremists and moderate their influence upon policy and society, adding this would help build a more harmonious and peaceful environment in each country, and a more harmonious and peaceful community internationally.

"It is with this in mind, and to foster the greater development of Muslims and Malaysians, that I have introduced what I call Islam Hadhari, or civilisational Islam to my fel-



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low Malaysians.

"Islam Hadhari demonstrates the compatibility of the noble values and injunctions of Islam with the demands of healthy modernity," he said.

He expressed confidence that Malaysia, noted for its tolerance, moderation, economic growth and commitment to peace, can be a positive example for the Muslim world.

He observed that the tension between the West and the Muslim world was constantly seared into hearts and minds by the recurring images of violence and destruction.

He said while occasionally the attacks occurred in Western countries or were directed at Western targets, much more often they occurred in Arab and Muslim World, including in Iraq where it was a daily horror.

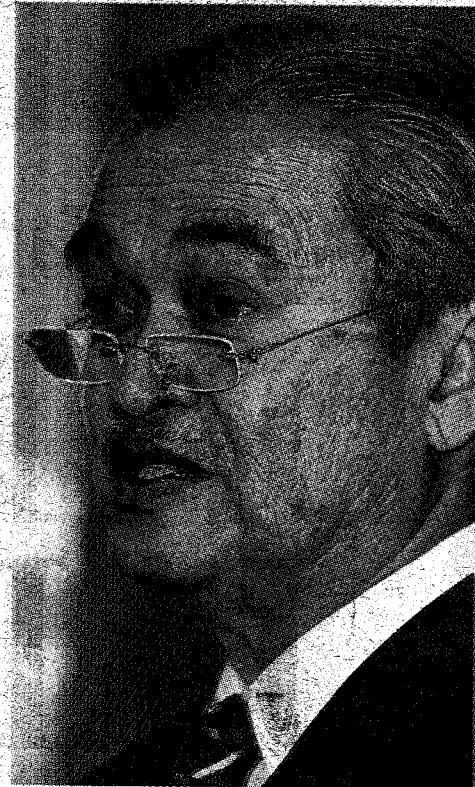
He quoted UN statistics that 70,810 civilians were either killed or wounded in Iraq last year.

"Can you envision 70,000 civilians being killed or wounded in the UK or the US in a year?" he asked.

He said the inability to construct a global order that could maintain the peace, restrain the strong and protect the weak was one of the main reasons for conflicts around the world. He added that problems between the West and the Muslim world were further compounded by the existence of religious and secular extremists and militants on both sides.

Speaking later, Abdullah said the government would not censor bloggers but they had to be responsible and that they could be subject to defamation, sedition and other laws.

"They cannot hide or take advantage of a situation and do something against the law," he said when asked to respond to the suit being taken by the New Straits Times Press (M) Bhd, its deputy chairman Datuk Kalimullah Hassan, chief executive officer Datuk Syed Faizal Syed Albar and former group editor Brendan Pereira against Ahirudin Attan and Ooi Chuan Aun over their web postings.



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi says Malaysia can be a positive example for the Muslim world.

He said bloggers could not plead ignorance of the laws as freedom without responsibility would be anarchy.

The prime minister also witnessed the handing over of a £50,000 (RM350,000) cheque for the setting up of a Malaysia Room at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

The cheque was handed over by the president of the LSE Alumni Society of Malaysia Datuk Dr Munir Majid to LSE director Sir Howard Davies.

Munir, Datuk Azman Yahya, Datuk Lee Hau Hian, Carmen Chua and the society each donated £10,000 to set up the teaching room at the new LSE academic building, which has produced over 1,500 Malaysian graduates.