

# Imams can do more for Islam — Dr M

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BANGI, Mon.—Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today stressed the need for imams to play a bigger role in guiding the Muslim community and clearing misconceptions about Islam.

He said an imam should do more than just lead mass prayers; he must also assume the role of a community leader.

The Prime Minister was speaking at the opening of the national-level course on "Islamic Understanding" at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia here.

Three hundred imams and missionaries from all over the country are attending the course, organised by the Malaysian Dakwah Islamiyah Foundation (Yadim) and the Rabitah Al-Alam Al-Islami.

The course ends on May 10.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said imams must be conversant with current developments around the world and they should know how Muslims fit into those developments.

## Committee

"If they fail to understand all these developments, the imams will not be able to function effectively as leaders of the Muslim community," he added.

He said the mosque is a place where Muslims should foster close relations.

"It would be wrong if we turn the mosque into a place where we divide the Muslims," he said. "Imams would be committing a sin if they allowed such things to hap-

pen.

"However, the imams are sometimes powerless to overcome these problems.

"Thus, it is necessary to upgrade the capacity of the imams so that they can prevent these unfortunate developments."

He said the Government was keen to cooperate with any Islamic institution to strengthen the position of the re-

ligion and the solidarity of Muslims.

A mosque committee at the national level has been formed under the National Council for Islamic Affairs and it is now studying cooperation programmes between the various states in Malaysia.

One of the aims of the programmes is to make the mosque a missionary centre for the solidarity of Muslims.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the Government had also agreed to appoint a representative to the Regional Committee on Mosques based in Jakarta. The committee was set up under the auspices of the Rabitah.

Among the guests at the opening ceremony was the Deputy Secretary-General of the Rabitah, Sheikh Mohamed Ali Mokhtar.