

PM: Don't be hasty critics

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon.— Muslims should not confine themselves to one interpretation of Islamic rules, including that of an Islamic government, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

At the same time, they should not be hasty in accusing an administration of being un-Islamic because it held a different interpretation of an Islamic government.

The Prime Minister said there were numerous interpretations of an Islamic government and no person had the right to claim that his definition was the accurate or correct one.

"In my opinion, until Judgment Day there will still be differences in opinion on the definition of an Islamic government.

"This is because the interpreter is not a prophet of Allah, although he may be highly knowledgeable in religious matters," he said when opening the Islamic Centre today.

In view of this, Dr Mahathir said Muslims should not restrict themselves to any one interpretation to the extent that they became adversaries with other Muslims who did not accept their definition.

He said that if Muslims persisted in accepting only one interpretation, then hostilities or even war among the community was inevitable.

Dr Mahathir added that an interpretation could only be rejected if it was found to be in conflict with Islamic rules.

"And even then, it would have to be confirmed by religious experts after careful and in-depth study.

"Therefore, do not be hasty in accusing an administration of being un-Islamic merely because it upholds a different interpretation of an Islamic government," he said.

Also present at the opening of the centre was Maldives President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom and his wife Madam Nasreena.

Dr Mahathir also spoke on the importance of solidarity among the Islamic community.

He urged Muslims not to be misled by what appeared to be Islam until they neglected the importance of unity among themselves.

Quoting a phrase from the Quran, Dr Mahathir said Allah urged his believers not to criticise or belittle other groups because the latter may be better than the group that made the criticism.

Dr Mahathir added that the Government's efforts to heighten the Islamic faith in the the context of creating an Islamic awareness, had nearly reached its objectives.

A majority of Muslims in the country now have a committed attitude towards Islam and had willingly accepted the religion as a way of life.

At the same time non-Muslims too understood and accepted the Government's efforts in the assimilation of Islamic values.

This had prompted the Government to take a more positive step in implementing other efforts towards

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heightening the Islamic
faith in the country.

He said the policy on assimilation of Islamic values was aimed at making Muslims practise positive values to make them better workers and to improve their living standards.

The Government wanted Islam to be a mobiliser for Muslims to grasp every available opportunity to strengthen their position.

He also said the teachings of Islam should be interpreted and understood on the present day context.

As an example, Dr Mahathir said wastage was against the teachings of Islam but the definition of wastage was confined to the use of money.

Wastage, he added, should also be interpreted to include under-utilisation of wealth and other resources.

Dr Mahathir also said Muslims should strengthen their self-resilience.

The Prime Minister and President Maunoon later viewed an exhibition on Islam at the centre's lobby.

More than 1,000 items ranging from handwritten Qurans to weapons used by previous Rulers are on display.