

HOW NATIONALISM WILL HELP ISLAM

THE concept of nationalism does not contradict Islam but will give strength to its struggle and promote brotherhood among Muslims, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

"As a Malay organisation, Umno will hold fast to the spirit of nationalism and will continue to defend the special position of the Malays.

"We will not neglect our responsibilities simply to fish for votes," he said in an apparent reference to PAS.

The opposition party had said recently that it would do away with the privileges and rights of the Malays if it was voted into power.

It also said nationalism was against Islam "as it transcends all barriers."

Dr Mahathir described those who wanted to abolish these rights as traitors to the Malays, and added that they had gone against the teachings of the religion.

"We must not interpret religion for our own self-interest like this group, which claims to follow the teachings of Islam," Dr Mahathir said.

"Being nationalistic doesn't mean one should be boastful and arrogant or look down on others.

"A strong sense of nationalism will motivate us to work harder and become a nation with dignity that is respected by others," he said.

"We don't want to make enemies of those who place importance in form rather than in substance in Islam.

"But what is important is not the difference in views on Islam, but how we can

accept differences and remain united."

Dr Mahathir also said that the administration was in keeping with the teachings of Islam despite the fact that it took into consideration the interests of non-Muslims.

Stressing that Muslims should not force non-Muslims to practise what Islam requires, he said: "If we try to impose on them what

our religion asks us to do, they will find ways to get around the rules we make."

Umno did not want to be hypocritical or make interpretations that were more rigid than what was advocated by Islam and later commit acts that were contrary to these interpretations.

"We try to be flexible where possible and this

benefits the Muslims in the long run," he said.

"We are not hypocrites who pretend to be Muslims while we are in the country but commit immoral acts when we are overseas.

"We don't want to preach what we are not able to practise," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the name of Islam had been tarnished because of the actions of a group of Muslims.

On efforts to assimilate Islamic values into the administration, Dr Mahathir said:

"If we succeed in ensuring that the administration is clean, efficient and trustworthy, disciplined, diligent, responsible and courteous, Islam will flourish and we will find happiness in this world and the hereafter," he said.