

MAHATHIR: NO ROOM FOR OPPRESSION

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — There is no room for oppression or exploitation by any Government agency, such as the police, in a democratic country with Islam as the official religion, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said tonight.

He said the police in the country had always carried out their duties responsibly, with courage, patience and faith.

"In enforcing the law, they do not make any distinction with regard to race, religion or political beliefs," he said, when closing the Quran reading competition of the Royal Malaysian Police Force at the police training centre in Jalan Gurney.

Dr Mahathir was confident the police force would be able to shoulder its responsibilities satisfactorily if they continued with such faith, patience and courage, as well as with discipline, efficiency and morality.

Islamic values

He said the role of the police was indeed challenging and was fitting to the teachings of the Quran.

It was unfortunate, therefore, he added, that certain groups in society had made the police force a target of their criticisms whenever issues relating to national security and the sovereignty of the Constitution and the law arose.

This, he added, was because these people were not aware of the role of the police in defending the security of the country for the people's well-being.

"Nevertheless, I am proud and I thank God that our policemen are not easily influenced nor are their spir-

its weakened by such allegations."

Dr Mahathir also said the defence of peace and security was difficult and the Government's expenditure for it mammoth.

"The Government's spending to increase the strength of the armed forces can be cut and the savings used for other pressing needs if the *rakyat* are disciplined and adhere strongly to the true teachings of Islam... to be trustworthy, honest and to reject any wrongdoing."

This was the reason why the Government encouraged the assimilation of Islamic values and the holding of Quran reading competitions.

"The Malaysian society would not only be more harmonious but also respected for the peace and security it enjoys without excessive police control," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the true objective of holding a Quran reading competition was not in the prize the winner gets but for the individual to be closer to the Quran and its teachings.

He said the theme of the Malaysian police force's Quran reading competition, "Professionalism, the Foundation of the Police Service", was apt because the strength of the police force in any country was based on public opinion of the level of its professionalism.

Dr Mahathir said professionalism also meant a high degree of selfless service and one which required undivided loyalty, dedication and discipline.

"To the police, this means loyalty to the nation and the Constitution... its efficiency and performance must be continuously upgraded so that the police will not only be effective but will be respected by all quarters," he said.