

Nation needs firm leaders: Mahathir

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — The country needs firm leaders and administrators to help the Government ensure harmony, justice and prosperity for the people, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight.

The Prime Minister said leaders and administrators who lacked firmness and a sense of responsibility would weaken the entire society.

Opening the annual Quran reading competition at the Islamic Centre here tonight, Dr Mahathir said corruption, favouritism, dadah addiction and alcoholism were some of the characteristics which reflected the inability of leaders to be firm and to face challenges.

"A society and country led by weak leaders and administrators will ruin it and the pride of the people in the nation will diminish," he said.

The Prime Minister said leaders and administrators must always be firm in carrying out their responsibility although they might face obstacles and criticism in the process.

He urged parents and educationists to be firm in their action, saying it played a significant role in moulding the attitude and behaviour of the younger generation.

Dr Mahathir said the Government

was doing its best to cultivate noble qualities among the people, including civil servants, through the assimilation of Islamic values in the Government's administration.

He called on the people to participate in various Islamic education programmes.

He said the theme *Umat Teguh, Islam Teguh* was chosen for this year's competition because the Government was aware of the importance of developing good individuals.

"Therefore, there must be serious efforts to eliminate all forms of negative values among Muslims," he added.

Call to Muslims

Only by adopting good values would they be able to enhance the strength of the country, determine the honour of Muslims and uphold the supremacy of the religion, he added.

Earlier today, Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Yusof Noor said non-Muslims should not make an issue of Government efforts to instil Islamic values in the administration when such efforts do not impinge on their religious freedom.

Opening an exhibition on the history of the Quran reading competition, Dr

Yusof said that although Islam is the official religion of the country, Muslims had no intention of offending those of other religions.

"As Muslims, we are striving to make Malaysia a model of a peaceful and harmonious country."

On reports of the disappearance of verses from the *mushaf* of the Quran, he said the Religious Affairs Division of the Prime Minister's Department had sent samples of the defective Quran to the Chemistry Department for analysis.

"We are still awaiting the findings of the department."

He said correspondence with Muslim countries revealed that they, too, had reports of similar incidents.

However, he added, there were countries which refused to reveal the incidents for fear of negative repercussions from their people.

As Muslims, he said, they are enjoined to believe in the all-encompassing power of Allah, including the taking away of the Quran from the Muslims.

Dr Yusof, however, reminded Muslims not to make it an issue that would cause confusion.

"Whatever happens, Muslims should continue with their daily activities. They should not react by abandoning their studies or their land."