

Dr M: I'm dying to be 'ulamak'

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today had the delegates roaring with laughter when he said he was dying to be given the title *ulamak* so that he could speak on Islam.

Yesterday, an Umno Wanita delegate, Hajah Zaleha Husin from the Nilam Puri division in Kelantan, conferred the title *mujahid* (Islamic warrior) on him.

Dr Mahathir said he wasn't sure if he deserved the title because he neither wore a turban nor sported a beard.

"I don't even handle guns. I don't know how to shoot. But if am allowed, I'd like to ask for another ti-

tle. I always liked the title *ulamak*," said the Prime Minister amidst a roar of laughter from delegates and observers.

"While delegates were debating the resolution on religion, I wrote a note to Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad. He is not called *ustaz*, but he is very much more knowledgeable on Islam than Subky Latif (the Pas information chief), who is called *ustaz*.

"I asked him (Wan Mokhtar) what is the origin of the word *ulamak*. He said it came from the word *alim* or knowledgeable. A knowledgeable person is known as *ulamak*. But I asked him if it is confined to Islamic

knowledge only. He said no. A person who is knowledgeable in any field can be called *ulamak*.

"Since I consider myself having some knowledge of medicine — though I cannot treat anybody, including myself, now — but I do have some knowledge of medicine and some of politics, am I qualified to be called *ulamak*?"

"He said qualified," said the Prime Minister.

Dr Mahathir was replying to points raised during the debate on the various resolutions. He spent much of his winding-up speech on the call to ban gambling and for the Government to do more for Malays.