

# Be tolerant, Dr Mahathir tells delegates Islamic laws can't be forced on others

**KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — Good Muslims are not made by law, but are moulded by an environment that allows them to choose between good and bad, Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.**

He said in multi-religious Malaysia, practices which were forbidden by Islam had to be allowed to cater for the non-Muslims. But Muslims should treat these practices as a test of their faith.

Those who passed the test were, in fact, better Muslims than those who had never been subjected to such temptations because they lived in countries that implemented Islamic laws to the fullest extent.

In winding up the debate at the Umno general assembly here, the Prime Minister said it was well-known that Muslim men from these countries could hardly control their desires when they travelled in a lift together with women not dressed in the costumes they were accustomed to.

He said they would commit worse sins than a Muslim from Malaysia would imagine committing once they left their own countries.

"Surely this is not the kind of Muslim we want to be. We believe in God and let him be the judge of our faith," said the Prime Minister.

Dr Mahathir made the comment in response to the many calls by delegates for the Government to impose stricter Islamic laws and to ban such activities as gambling and drinking.

He said the Government was not agreeable to such a suggestion, maintaining that the better way of convincing non-Muslims of the virtues of Islam was not by banning these activities but by being exemplary in all fields.

Islam, he said, was brought to this country some 600 years ago by successful Arab and Indian traders. Their success and their knowledge had impressed the Malay Rulers who later embraced the faith.

He asked: "Would the Malay Rulers have embraced Islam if the religion was brought by slaves and workers?"

Dr Mahathir said the Government would continue to allow, on a controlled basis, such activities as gambling and drinking. He advised Muslims to stay away from them.

The Prime Minister was also saddened by the habit of some Muslims who passed judgment on fellow Muslims because of the way they dressed.

"It is not the dress that makes a good Muslim but what is in your heart," said Dr Mahathir, adding that the imposition of strict Islamic laws did not mean that Islamic values would be successfully assimilated.

On the contrary, because the Muslims feared the law, they would dress accordingly and appear to be true Muslims.

The Umno president, who was yesterday referred to by a Wanita delegate as a true *mujahid* (Islamic warrior), had the delegates in stitches when he said he was not sure if he was a *mujahid* but said he had always wanted to use the title *ulamak* so that he could speak about Islam freely (see story on page 2).

He said after he had referred the matter to Umno vice-president Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad, who is an acknowledged Islamic scholar, he felt that he could use the title *ulamak*.

Dr Mahathir said the use of force was never encouraged in Islam, even on Muslims. Therefore, he added, it was unreasonable for Muslims in Malaysia to force their religion on others. He said Muslims must be tolerant of each other and of

## 'Practise moderation' call

★ FROM PAGE ONE

the non-Muslims.

"We must practise moderation. We should be able to withstand temptation. We must be strong."

Dr Mahathir said it was important for Malaysian Muslims to improve and protect the image of Islam so that others would be convinced of the virtues of the religion.

★ PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 2 COL 1