

Mahathir turns 'ulamak' to explain faith and temptation

DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad turned ~~ulamak~~ when he explained the rationale of allowing gambling and other non-Islamic activities while promoting the assimilation of Islamic values in the country.

He said a Muslim was no less a Muslim if there was vice around him.

He said vice should be viewed as a challenge for all Muslims to strengthen their faith in their religion.

"If we close off all opportunities for us to indulge in vice, it does not mean we will be faithful to Islam. We will not know how strong our faith is because we are not exposed to them," he said.

He said a Muslim should not be gauged by what was present in his surroundings or by what he wore or whether he prayed less or more.

He said Malaysians lived in a multiracial society and all Muslims were responsible for presenting Islam's image not just to the other races but also to the world because the "foreign media has painted Islam as a bad religion."

"We must show that Islam is not a religion that oppresses anyone and that it has been successful in developing the country.

"That was why the policy (of assimilation of Islamic values in the administration) was introduced," Dr Mahathir said.

Using the early Arab and Indian Muslim traders who brought the religion to Malacca as an example, he said the Sultan then would not have become a Muslim if he had not been impressed with their success.

"If they had come as slaves, I do not think the Sultan would have embraced Islam.

"Once we have proven that Islam is strong and progressive, I am sure more people will convert," he said.

He said Muslims must display their resilience in the face of exposure to vice. "God willing, we will be successful," he said.

Using a country whose people were 100 per cent Muslim living under strict Muslim law as another example, Dr Mahathir said their women were heavily veiled while the men appeared to be well-behaved.

"I say this is not good because they are not exposed to the things that will test their faith in Islam.

"It does not mean that their faith is strong because they could be afraid of being punished for indulging in vices. We will never know how strong their faith is because they have not been tested," he said.

He asked whether there were any Muslims in the country who ate pork or drank alcohol.

"They do not consume them because of their Islamic faith and they feel dirty if they did.

"We also do not take drugs not because we have strict laws on them but because we know it is a bad thing to do," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Islam preached moderation and called on its followers to be tolerant of others.

He said that if the Government banned Toto or the casino it would also have to ban football because some people gambled on this as well.