

PM on absorbing Islamic values

By Sufi Yusof

KUALALUMPUR, Mon. -- The Government would absorb Islamic values that could shape it into an efficient and effective institution, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

As these were universally accepted values, and not exclusive to Islam alone, he said putting them into practice could put Malaysia on a strong footing to "compete with other nations."

He said a Government's administration that truly assimilated these values would bring immense benefit to the people because practising them would assure success.

"But, if Islamic values were given a narrow or wrong-interpretation and the administration fails, it is not Islam that is to blame but those who interpreted it incorrectly," he said.

The Prime Minister said this in an article entitled, *Assimilation of Islamic Values*, in a book on "Values and Ethics in Public Service" published by the National Institute of Public Administration (Intan).

The book was launched by the Chief Secretary to the Government, Tan Sri Ahmad Sarji Abdul Hamid, today.

Dr Mahathir said when the Government announced that it would absorb Islamic values into its administration, no official and detailed explanation was given on how it was to be done.

"This resulted in confusion and varied understanding, and questions were raised on the contradictions which occurred within the nation's practices," he said.

The Prime Minister said in order to understand the policy, it was important for civil servants to consider and understand Malaysia's multiracial and multi-religious society.

"While the Muslim staff are able to accept the call to adopt Islamic values, non-Muslims do not easily accept the concept and cannot be forced to drop all their values and practices to make way for Islamic values," he said.

Dr Mahathir said in Malaysia, Muslims accepted that non-Muslims could consume food and drinks and indulge in practices pro-

hibited in Islam.

However, he said, this did not mean that Islam was non-existent in the country, neither did it deny the fact that Islam was the official religion of the country.

"In a country like Malaysia where a multiracial society exists, tolerance among the Muslims is important, and therefore, the assimilation of these values should not be forced upon the non-Muslims."

He said the honesty and sincerity of Prophet Muhammad should serve as the guiding light to Muslims, but added that many placed importance on sporting a beard like the Prophet instead of the values of honesty like the Prophet.

"If we regard the dressing and appearance of the Prophet as part of his practices, why should we not regard the personality of the Prophet as his practice to be emulated?"

"Are those people, who perform certain religious practice but are dishonest, lazy, corrupt, irresponsible, insincere and unknowledgeable, really practising Islamic teachings?" he asked.

The Prime Minister gave

the *Hudaiyah* agreement between the Prophet and the Quraish Arabs as an example of the Prophet's "give and take" attitude which should be followed by all Muslims.

Dr Mahathir said while Muslims should accept and practice Islamic values with full recognition of accountability, non-Muslims could accept the values which did not contradict their beliefs.

"If they were to practice what is prohibited in Islam, but at the same time cultivate values which are acceptable to Islam, then this is sufficient," he said.

He said in ensuring the success of the Government's administration, certain important Islamic values could be practised by all Malaysians, Muslims or non-Muslims.

These include sincerity, honesty, responsibility, hard work, discipline, dignity, priority for society instead of self-centredness, far-sightedness, sacrifice, absence of avarice, possessing good morals and good behaviour.

Dr Mahathir said these values were important in the administration since the

Government needed to place emphasis on the welfare of the people.

"There are certain Muslim quarters who view that only by enforcing *Hudud* laws, the administrator is assimilating Islamic values in the Government."

"However, they fail to realise that there are certain leeways which can be taken into consideration depending on the situation."

He said for example, Muslims who formed a minority and were not able to enforce *Hudud* laws, could not be seen as violating Islamic laws neither were they un-Islamic.

"Muslims would not like to be administered by the laws of other religions where they are powerless."

"Therefore, they should not force non-Muslims to be punished under Islamic law, especially if such a move would create chaos and endanger the Muslim community and its administration," he said.

The Prime Minister said that even in certain countries with Muslim Governments, including Saudi Arabia, some *Hudud* laws were not enforced.