

PM to experts: Study past ideas of Islam

By ROHAIZAD A. RAHIM

KUALA LUMPUR: Scholars should conduct research into past interpretations of Islam to determine their relevance in the current situation, said ~~Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad~~ yesterday.

Such research should not be construed as an attempt to contradict the religion but only to clarify certain points to make the interpretations more absolute.

"These researches would only contradict past scholars due to changing times," he said at the opening of the Malaysian Institute of Islamic Understanding (IKIM).

The Prime Minister also launched a congress titled *Approaching the 21st century: Islam and Vision 2020* in conjunction with the institute's opening.

Present was Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Ahmad Sarji Abdul Hamid.

Dr Mahathir said that as the world progressed, certain things which were once regarded as miracles were accepted as part of life now.

On IKIM, Dr Mahathir

said the institute's purpose was to correct any maligned views on Islam and Muslims in general.

According to him, the current perception of Islam is that it is related to backwardness, poverty and weakness. Of late, the religion was also linked to terrorism and irrationality.

"I am disappointed with

such views but it is a fact that Muslims and Islamic countries are backward, weak and dependent on foreign countries for their needs in this modern world.

"At the same time, Muslims themselves find it hard to work and co-operate with each other and allow themselves to be used

for the interest of other people," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the present administrations of Islamic countries proved to be weak, backward and chaotic.

"There is not one Islamic country which can be regarded as a superpower. They are but only developing countries de-

spite the fact that some are rich."

Dr Mahathir attributed this to the inability of Islamic countries to achieve technological sophistication.

To overcome this, he said Islamic scholars should work towards achieving such progress from the religion's perspective.