

Acquire skills, PM tells preachers

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — The Government has high hopes in Muslim preachers and missionaries. **Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad** said, adding that they should equip themselves with a wide array of skills to serve the present generation.

The Prime Minister said such preachers were difficult to get and urged the relevant authorities to develop a core of them for the future.

The Prime Minister said this when launching the national-level course for Islamic preachers at the National Institute of Public Administration (Intan) in Bukit Kiara today.

Also present were Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department **Datuk Dr Abdul Hmid Othman** and Chief Secretary to the Government **Tan Sri Ahmad**

Sarji Abdul Hamid.

Dr Mahathir said: "Preachers today need to revise their activities to suit the present era. They shouldn't create problems for society by adopting an extremist stance, confusing the people and causing general disunity.

"They should not spread teachings which would weaken Islamic countries, which are already weak now. They should not pass judgment on how Islamic certain people are with the objective of bringing them down.

"Instead, they should correct the confusion and restore the faith of those who have deviated so that the disunity among Muslims could be rectified. This is their real work," he said.

He said the government placed high hopes on the preachers in carrying out

their work as it wanted the country to become an Islamic nation which is capable of defending its people and the country.

Dr Maathir said Islamic extremism would only weaken Islamic nations and obstruct development. Indirectly, these groups were the tools of the enemies of Islam.

He said attempts by these groups to topple the governments of Islamic countries through the use of force had only succeeded in weakening the countries and retard the development in these countries.

As such, he said, the countries concerned were unable to compete with developed non-Islamic nations.

"These Islamic countries become more backward and are eventually forced to depend on other non-Islamic nations and lose their free

dom," he said.

He said even if these extremist groups succeeded in ousting the existing governments and take over the rule, the situation in the countries would not turn for the better.

Normally, he added, countries which were under the rule of these groups were more backward and could not compete or effectively oppose non-Islamic countries.

"They can also be used by the enemies of Islam to further weaken the Islamic community as well as the Islamic world," he said.

That is why, Dr Mahathir said, when an Islamic community was being attacked by a non-Islamic enemy, not even one Islamic country was capable of providing the necessary assistance to the community concerned.