

The flexibility in Islam

Sun. 1 31 1993

MUSLIMS should strive to seek the substance in Islam, and not be obsessed with just the form, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

The Prime Minister said Muslims should demonstrate to others that Islam allows flexibility in its approaches in tackling issues facing the *ummah*.

An interpretation of the teachings which is too rigid might not serve the *ummah* in the world's present environment, he said at the seventh international conference of the World Assembly of Muslim Youth.

Dr Mahathir added that Islam represents fairness and democracy, but for others to believe that this is so will mean that Muslims must first of all be fair and able to administer themselves well.

Dr Mahathir was asked to give his views on how Malaysia had been able to show

a commendable degree of tolerance among its multi-racial population.

He said that it would not be possible to force others to adhere to Muslim laws.

"In Malaysia, we want to show everyone that we are fair and what we do is compatible to the teachings of Islam. We must show to others that in a Muslim-majority country, we can administer fairly," he said.

He said that this was important so that others could have the proper impression of Islam — that it is flexible, progressive and is not associated with violence.

He said that one must take into consideration that in some societies, not everyone is a Muslim, thus making it impossible to have everyone following the Islamic ways and teachings.

A participant asked the Prime Minister to elaborate on Vision 2020. Dr Mahathir said this is a target for Ma-

laysia to achieve developed nation status, comparable with others which have developed earlier.

However, the difference is that Malaysia wants to be developed while retaining its moral values, good sense and spiritual enlightenment, he added.

"We want to be as educated, as rich and as capable as others but without losing our values and good sense," he said.

Asked how Malaysia was helping the Moros in south Philippines, Dr Mahathir said discussion with Filipino national leaders has been useful in bringing development to the region.

He said Malaysia wants to help through development efforts, not through liberation. "We can't help others overthrow their governments. We don't like this (method) because we don't want this done to us," he said.