

PM: Government will counter

By Vijayan Menon and Esther Tan

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the Government will take measures to counter the anti-hadith group allegedly led by Kassim Ahmad.

"We have to fight such deviants and explain to the people the *sunnah waljam-*

mah (the accepted teachings). If we allow the (deviant) teachings to spread then the people will be confused," he said after attending a gathering to mark the *Maulidur Rasul* (Prophet Muhammad's birthday) celebration at Stadium Negara here.

He said this when asked to comment on what action would be taken against the anti-hadith group.

The King had also ex-

pressed concern over deviant teachings that confused Muslims when he addressed the gathering earlier.

Asked whether Kassim was still an Umno member, Dr Mahathir said, "It does not matter whether he is a member or not. If his (Kassim's) opinion is wrong then we will still say he is wrong."

On calls by Umno members that action be taken against Kassim and the

anti-hadith group for his deviant teachings, Dr Mahathir said, "It is the responsibility of the Government (to explain to the people) and not that of the party."

"He (Kassim) has to clarify his position regarding his understanding of the religion."

On whether a dialogue should be held with Kassim, Dr Mahathir said there was no need for one.

Asked whether action

anti-hadith group

could be taken against Kassim, Dr Mahathir said there was no need for this.

"We have not reached that stage...we can overcome the problem through other means," he added.

Later, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Othman, who was also present, said there were only about 300 among the anti-hadith followers.

"Some are really hardcore

and not willing to change their beliefs but others can be corrected and brought back to the original path."

He also said he had never asked for a dialogue with the anti-hadith group and had been misquoted (by the media).

He said the proposed meeting by Pusat Islam with the anti-hadith group that he had announced earlier was in reality an explanatory and re-educational

one and not a dialogue as reported. He said the aim of the meeting was to discuss matters concerning the deviation of the *akidah* (faith) and to educate and inform members to accept the *ijtihad* (consensus).

He added that a dialogue would imply that their (anti-hadith group's) views had been accepted which was not the case.

He said such deviant teachings always took place

in Islamic countries.

"For instance in Egypt such things occur every 30 years or so and Indonesia too faced similar problems."

He said such deviant teachings were contained in books written by Jews and Westerners who undertook research on the religion with the aim of weakening the Muslim community.

"Such authors are dangerous as they only try to paint a negative picture of Islam."