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Dr Mahathir: I speak the truth about ulama

KEMAMAN, Fri. - Hasn't Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad given a thought for a moment that his fierce and frequent assaults on some of those considered ulama in this country would backfire on him, Umno and the Barisan Nasional?

This was the question posed to him at a Press conference at the end of his two-day trip to Terengganu. His answer?

"No ... I speak the truth," was his unhesitant and emphatic answer.

The Umno president said he could not accept people who had no religious knowledge, but "who suddenly claim themselves as pewaris Nabi (heir to the Prophet). It seems so easy to become pewaris Nabi."

The Prime Minister said not all those who claimed to be ulama were ulama in the true sense of the word.

"Some of these people speak about religion, but we know they are not saying the right things. Can we accept these people as ulama?"

He said there were also ulama in Umno, but their function, among others, was to correct the wrong interpretations made by those from the Opposition.

Asked whether the Malays would accept his explanation on the matter, Dr Mahathir, who is also BN chairman, said: "I think so...you can wait for the (general) election."

He said that Malays who have an open mind would agree with him.

Dr Mahathir, in almost all his speeches during his tour of the various States, especially lately, had been critical of the ulama, including the head of Pas consultative council, Datuk Nik Aziz Nik Mat.

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