

Be responsible and sincere in your duty, religious teachers told

SUN 13 NOV 2001

PUTRAJAYA, Mon: Religious teachers must be sincere in carrying out their responsibility to disseminate Islamic teachings to their students.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said they should also encourage the young to seek other contemporary knowledge which will enable Muslims to progress and not be discriminated against.

Mahathir said religious teachers should not be teaching Islam because of other interests.

"Some focus on hating certain people, and the teaching of Islam is neglected. This is related to politics and not religion," Mahathir said in his address to ulama and religious teachers at a meeting here today.

"I hope that religious teachers are aware of their responsibility, and push aside other interests to focus on teaching religion so that we can shape a noble Muslim society that is able to defend Islam."

He said Muslims and Islamic countries today are deemed as oppressed and not trustworthy, as they are seen as not following the teachings of Islam.

He said they focus on trivial matters that will

only divide Muslims.

Mahathir said the various social problems in the country could have been prevented if the people are taught the correct values.

He said it is important to inculcate the true teachings of Islam among Muslim children so that they will always follow them.

"Similarly, if we teach them the wrong things in their early years, they will remember them when they grow older.

"So the role of religious teachers in shaping the minds of the young is very important."

Mahathir also said that not all Muslims must study religion and become ulama.

"We should acquire other knowledge, which could benefit fellow Muslims. We must explain to the Muslims the importance of knowledge in such subjects as science, technology and ICT."

Later during the press conference, Mahathir said various briefing sessions must be held regarding the matter as it involves various groups of people.

He also said he will consider the ulama and religious teachers' request for a raise in their monthly allowance from the present RM250.