

# **Dr M: Don't misuse Islam for political ends**

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PUTRAJAYA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has cautioned ulamas involved in politics against misinterpreting the teachings of Islam to legitimise their misdeeds.

"When this happens, it brings bad implications on Islam and equally bad repercussions on Muslims.

"It has been observed that when such ulamas get involved in politics, a large section of the masses is led astray into ignoring the teachings of Islam and believing that they are holier than other Muslims," he said.

Dr Mahathir was elaborating on his New Year Message over RTM, which dwells at length on beviat teachings and ulamas, to reporters who approached him after the message was taped at the Prime Minister's Office here yesterday.

He said ulamas who stres-

sed more on the non-obligatory rather than the obligatory aspects under Islam only contributed to making Muslims a confused lot.

Dr Mahathir said while some ulamas believed that they should be regarded as "descendants of the Prophet" not all of them could genuinely be reckoned so.

"Obviously for one to be recognised as the Prophet's descendant he should be someone who puts religion first and above other interest," he said.

However, when ulamas mixed self and political interests with religious teachings then they no longer met the criteria for being the Prophet's descendants.

Asked on Malaysia being recognised as a model Islamic nation in the eyes of the world, Dr Mahathir said it was really up to foreigners whether or not Malaysia merited such recognition.

"But presently many foreigners view Malaysia as a model for other Muslim nations to emulate.

"This is a recognition. This requires us to preserve such a situation and not to deviate from the teachings of Islam," he said.

The prime minister also spoke about a perceived fear among Muslims to visit or do business in Europe and the United States following the Sept 11 terror attacks on New York and Washington.

Dr Mahathir said if such a fear was real, then it would only be logical for Muslims to travel and explore business opportunities in other Muslim countries.

"If in the past they felt that their investments were not welcomed (in Europe and the United States) then they may have to consider moving their investments to Muslim countries instead," he said.