

Islamic knowledge alone inadequate, says Mahathir

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues: It is not required that all Muslims have in-depth knowledge of Islam and become experts in the religion, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The most important thing is for Muslims to hold on to the fundamentals of Islam and, at the same time, learn other forms of knowledge which will also be of use to mankind.

"If one tries to become an *ulama* or an expert in religion, they will not be able to master other kinds of knowledge, as learning the whole thing about Islam will take a long time," he said.

Mahathir said this in a dialogue after opening a conference on *Issues and mind-opening process of*

the Muslim Malays organised by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (DBP).

He said the spirit of Islam and Islamic teachings on their own is inadequate to protect Muslims.

He said although he may not be an *ulama*, he is no less a Muslim since he knows what is required of him, that is to learn to master adequate knowledge to protect other Muslims.

He said those studying in-depth about Islam will not be able to excel in other areas like administration, management and military.

To another question, Mahathir reiterated his stand that Muslim fundamentalists are not extremists, but people who hold on to the fundamental teachings of Islam, such as brotherhood, respect for

each other and the protection of fellow Muslims.

He said Muslims should not simply add their own opinions to the fundamentals of Islam, or emphasise on trivial matters that would create problems and confuse others.

Mahathir also said Muslims are still not benefitting fully from the education system although many changes have been made to it.

Unless the Muslims accept that the act of acquiring knowledge is a serious religious requirement, they will continue to be weak and oppressed by others, he said.

He concluded the dialogue by saying: "Islam is a perfect religion but it is the Muslims who are not yet perfect."