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Defend honour of Islam, says Dr M

Noor Adzman Baharuddin

KEPALA BATAS, Thurs. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad urged Muslims tonight to work together to defend the honour of Islam which was fast eroding.

The Prime Minister said the religion had been blamed for all the problems in the world today.

"Terrorism and backwardness are synonymous with Islam and Muslims. Muslims must all rise to remove the bad name given to Islam," he said at the opening of the 45th national-level Quran recital test at the Dewan Millenium here.

Dr Mahathir's speech was read by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

All States, except Kelantan and Terengganu, sent both men and women reciters for the five-day event. The two States sent their qari (male reciters) only.

Dr Mahathir said any efforts to enhance the honour of Islam should be carried out properly and in accordance to the principles of Islam which did not promote hostility and terrorism.

He also said the world today was witnessing the conflict among Muslims, caused by differences in opinion or understanding of the teachings of Islam.

The conflict among Muslims now and then was still caused by the abuse of Islam for other interests.

"Islam is being abused by those who claim they are leading the religion.

"These abuses have reached the most serious level to the extent that the perpetrators have poked fun at Islam or insult the religion.

"In fact, these groups of people have also insulted Allah which only goes to show that they are lost."

In Malaysia, he said, the Government was always providing assistance, including through guidance, both formally and informally, so that Malaysia could be a model to others.

Any religion-related criticism made by the Government was not aimed at discrediting anyone, but to safeguard the unity among Muslims, he added.

Dr Mahathir said as Muslims, all must be patient and forgiving and that these attributes must be given priority and stressed in all aspects of the people's lives to reduce the risk of disunity.

"By doing so, the beauty of Islam, as found in the Quran, can also be realised," he said.

He also said the Government encouraged Muslims to acquire as much knowledge as possible in any relevant field.

"If the world is racing with the sophistication in the field of information technology, then Muslims in Malaysia too must equip themselves with such knowledge so that they will not be left behind."

"In Islam, the acquiring of knowledge is expected of them and God has placed those who are pious and knowledgeable at the highest level," he said.