

25/10/2002

Government to keep tabs on religious lectures

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ALOR STAR, Thurs. - The Government will monitor tazkirah (religious lecture) held in mosques to prevent its abuse by those who incite Muslims into hating each other, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Dr Mahathir said many tazkirah, religious meetings where reminders are made on the need to follow the true teachings of Islam, held in mosques in between terawih prayers during the fasting month, were being used by a certain group to incite and spread slander.

"I ask that there are no interruptions when Muslims are conducting terawih prayers.

"Do not bring in things which have no connection with religion like politics, hating people and other things.

"People are there to pray, so do not disturb them," he said after launching the Islamic Dakwah Foundation of Malaysia (Yadim) and Kedah Umno's "Gerak Mesra" and Tazkirah programme.

On whether the Government would make it mandatory for mosques to use Government approved tazkirah speakers, Dr Mahathir said such action could be taken if the abuses became widespread.

In his speech earlier, Dr Mahathir said all Malays and not only the ulama had a responsibility to remind other Malays who misinterpreted Islam on the true teachings of the religion.

Dr Mahathir said one need not be registered with ulama associations in order to possess credibility when correcting others.

"This is because I have checked for myself the minimum requirements of entry to ulama associations, which only states that one needs to be at least 18 years of age.

"No minimum level of qualification is indicated... but these people claim the sole right to correct others, just because they belong to these associations," he said.

Dr Mahathir reminded Muslims that apart from basic religious obligations, they also must seek knowledge.