

Varied interpretations

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Cause of disunity among Muslims, says PM

BY CLARENCE CHUA

SHAH ALAM: The disunity among Muslims is not because of the teachings of Islam but the result of varied and contradicting interpretations of the Quran and the Hadith by scholars, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

"There is nothing wrong with the Quran. But the interpreters - even though learned with in-depth knowledge of Islam - may still make inaccurate interpretations," he said when launching the Mushaf Malaysia *Taba'ah'ain* Attakwa Quran at the Islamic Arts Complex here, yesterday.

The manuscript, decorated with local motifs, was completed by 50 workers skilled in Islamic arts. It is a project by Restu Foundation.

The Prime Minister said interpretations of the Quran must be done by ulamas with the intention to safeguard the interest of Muslims and Islam.

He said verses in the Holy Scripture were open to various interpretations and this had caused confusion and disunity among Muslims.

"To make the Quran a point of reference, interpretations must be made by a group of ulamas who have no self interest, apart from upholding the interest of Muslims.

"And they should not be so arrogant, regarding themselves as descendants of Prophet Muhammad, with no weaknesses or shortcomings like other human beings," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that there could never be any alteration to the Quran, as the Holy Book contained Allah's revelations. Any alteration would only be to the interpretations, in line with the changing times, he said.

The Prime Minister cited defence

equipment required during the time of the Prophet and the present time. He said the call for Muslims to be prepared to defend themselves had not changed and the difference in interpretation would only be in terms of the defence equipment required now.

Dr Mahathir said that those who condemned what they perceived as "non-traditional interpretation" of the

teachings of Islam, were those who frequently came up with "new interpretations" that were contrary to the established interpretation.

It would be considered "new interpretation and different from the traditional and original interpretation" when people stated that God resorted to profanity, was a thug or claimed that a person was a Muslim only if he

joined a certain political party, he said.

"The question is, why have they come up with interpretations not based, in any way, on the Quran?"

Dr Mahathir said their interpretation of the verses of the Quran and the Hadith needed to be studied and changed so that the unity of the Muslims could be restored.

At the function, Dr Mahathir was presented with a special edition of the Mushaf Al-Quran, produced by Restu Foundation.

In **Kuala Lumpur** last night, Dr Mahathir reminded Malaysians not to forget their roots although the country has made progress.

He said Malaysians would only be able to chart their future direction by remembering their roots and their past.

"We have moved forward a bit but do not forget our roots because if we forget where we came from, we would not know where we would be heading," he said at the 'Malam Darul Aman' dinner organised by the Sultan Abdul Hamid Old Collegians' Association of Alor Star, Kedah.

Dr Mahathir said he was glad that despite the hardship, he succeeded in pursuing further studies to eventually become a doctor and then Prime Minister. "Now, I have been the PM for 21 years. That's enough. So, in October I will be stepping down.

"Many people asked, 'So what will you do? Sleeping, I replied,'" he said.

In a lighter vein, Dr Mahathir said it was fun to be Prime Minister because his duties were only to make decisions while others would carry them out.

"That is the best part of being Prime Minister. I don't have to do anything, others will do it but I get the credit," he said.