

Former premier defends Kassim Ahmad
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Former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad has today defended controversial thinker Kassim Ahmad, claiming that the person is often misunderstood.

Mahathir said as a result of people not being able to debate with him, he is often misunderstood and labelled as anti-hadis (anti-Prophet Muhammad sayings).

"Kassim is labelled as such as they cannot reply to what he said. I am also labelled as anti-Chinese, racist and others.

"This is what Kassim faces, when he recites the Quran he is labeled as anti-hadis. The people who label others do not have the thinking to reply back to Kassim," he said during a press conference at Universiti Islam Antarabangsa in Gombak.

The former premier also criticised those who make police reports on what they view is wrong.

Mahathir said there is nothing wrong in lodging a police report, even if someone pinches you, you can make a report.

"Yet we are talking about freedom of expression," he said.

Kassim had over the weekend criticised the religious scholars' hold on the country, as he claimed religious leaders act like gods and goddesses, and are seen to be protected from sin and can decide everything about their lives.

The former PSRM president also said that women should not cover their hair.

Meanwhile, non-governmental organisation Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (Abim), in referring to Kassim's challenge to debate, said it is willing to enter a debate with him.

They described this as nothing new, where in the past Abim had held muzakarah (discussion) and a dialogue between Kassim and then-Abim deputy president Abdul Halim El Muhammady.

"Kassim failed to answer to the responses made. Hence, any debate with Kassim may not bring any positive results but we are willing to hold it," said Abim's vice-president, Hasri Harun.

"Abim is willing to debate with Kassim as long as he stop making baseless views against the Prophet, ulama and Islamic knowledge," he said.

At the same time, he said Abim had published a book titled 'Islam dan Al Hadith: Dialogue with Kassim Ahmad - satu analisa (Islam and Al Hadith : Dialogue with Kassim Ahmad - an analysis).

Hasri said Abim is of the view that it is time that the government, especially the various religious departments, be stern on deviant teachings as Kassim's thinking is against Islamic principles.

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