

Dr M: Clerics shouldn't have monopoly on Islam
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Accused of being anti-hadith, former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad today defended himself by saying that clerics should not have a monopoly on Islam.

Justifying his support for controversial scholar Kassim Ahmad in his blog today, Mahathir said that clerics or religious scholars should not have the final say about things simply because they speak Arabic.

Mahathir said that the hadith - a collection of recorded quotes and actions by the Prophet Muhammad - are recollections of human beings and should not be likened to the Quran which is the words of Allah.

“We know there are true hadiths and weak hadiths (hadiths the veracity of which are disputed). When the hadith goes against what Allah says in the Quran, which should we accept? If we hold true to the Quran, is that wrong?”

“Must we simply accept everything that is delivered by an Arab-speaking person who studied religion but has views clearly divergent to Islam as per the Quran and hadith?”

“Must we acknowledge whoever who claims to be an ulama (scholar)? Are all those in the ulama associations truly ulama?” he asked.

He said that those who label him and Kassim as anti-hadith find it convenient to label because they cannot argue their points and would prefer that everyone abide to their “fatwa” as if it is the word of God.

“Just accept what they say without thinking. Don't use their God-given brain because thinking is purportedly against Islam,” he said in his trademark sarcasm.

Justifying violence

Mahathir added that even in Arab-speaking countries, nations are torn apart and violence is justified by Arab-speaking scholars.

For example, he said, nowhere in the Quran does it say that a woman who has engaged in extra-marital sex should be killed either by stoning or by firing squad, as practised by the Taliban.

Instead, he said, Allah in the Quran had said dozens of times that any punishment should be meted out fairly and that cruelty is looked down upon.

Mahathir had earlier this month officially opened a Perdana Leadership Foundation lecture featuring Kassim Ahmad who spoke against re-interpreting the Quran merely using the hadith.

Kassim said that Muslims should not view the hadith like a divine source or deify the prophet as he was only a messenger of Allah, and not God.

He also spoke out against the “priesthood caste”, that is clerics and scholars' control of Islam,

including in Malaysia.

In his lengthy post, Mahathir also took veiled potshots at his detractors for being selective in choosing who to condemn.

Potshots against PAS

“My friends and I were labelled apostates by a certain party for cooperating with non-Muslims. No Arabic-speaking scholar defended me; maybe they agreed that I am an apostate.

“But when those who labelled me an apostate embraced non-Muslims, none of the Arabic-speaking Muslim scholars called (the party) apostates. What is their advantage? Are they above sin?” he asked in a thinly-veiled reference to PAS.

Apparently referring to PAS spiritual leader Nik Aziz Nik Mat, he said that another “scholar and mursyid (teacher)” fluent in Arabic even said that he would cooperate with the devil if the devil supported him.

“People who are fluent in Arabic and know what the Quran says about making deals with the devil did not make any accusations, or even labelled this scholar as anything. Why?” he asked.

He said the so-called scholars should not split the community further by denouncing each other, instead they should urge solidarity and unity.

“I know people will read this and say I am anti-hadith, anti-Quran and an apostate. I will meet my Maker soon, and will be with Him.

“I don't know if the accusations made against me will stand, but I am confident in Allah's judgment as He is most just and I will accept His judgment on me,” he said.

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