

Dr M: Jakim wants Muslims to only follow 'Islam Jakim'

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Zikri Kamarulzaman

The Islamic Development Department (Jakim) wants Muslims to follow its brand of religion, former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad charged today.

"The Quran says there is no compulsion in Islam. But Jakim wants to compel everybody to follow Jakim's version of Islam," Mahathir said at a press conference in Kuala Lumpur.

He said this when asked to comment on allegations that Jakim and other religious bodies were excessively encroaching into the personal spheres of Muslims.

Jakim was founded during Mahathir's time as prime minister.

The 90-year-old also rubbished remarks that it was a sin to pay zakat (tithes) directly to the needy.

"I read the Quran but it doesn't say you must pay zakat to the government.

"But I like to pay zakat to the government. Otherwise, you have to find poor people and warriors, it's very difficult," he said.

Mahathir was speaking after launching former law minister Zaid Ibrahim's book titled 'Assalamualaikum: Observations of the Islamisation of Malaysia'.

Mahathir also took a few jibes at Muslims, especially scholars and jurists.

In particular, he took a swipe at Muslims who read the Quran without understanding it.

He also criticised scholars who rejected interpretations of Islam based on translated versions.

"They say you don't understand Arabic, therefore your interpretation is wrong.

"You can't think, thinking is bad, you must only listen to what learned people say.

"I'm going to distance myself from this book," he said on a lighter note.

"I don't want those people to accuse me of thinking too much," he said.

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