

Be tactful, Dr M tells enforcers
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TAIPING: Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said enforcement officials should be fair and tactful when discharging their duties so as not to aggravate the prevailing negative perception of Islam.

"Give them a bit of power, they will make arrests," he said after opening the 51st annual general meeting of Perkim, the national Muslim welfare organisation, at a hotel here.

Dr Mahathir, who heads the organisation, said harsh action only served to give a bad impression about Islam and restricted efforts to spread its teachings.

Asked to give an example, he quipped: "Some people might not be happy with my reply."

However, in an apparent reference to a recent raid at a bookstore in Kuala Lumpur over the distribution of Canadian writer Irshad Manji's book *Allah, Liberty and Love*, Dr Mahathir said: "The thing had not been banned (at the time of the raid) but action was taken against the owner. This is wrong in the eyes of the law. It is better if we advise first."

In his speech, Dr Mahathir said Muslims worldwide were facing all sorts of problems, citing the Arab uprisings and bombings in several countries as examples.

Such incidents, he said, could have been avoided if Muslims understood and stuck to the teachings of the Quran.

On another issue, Dr Mahathir said going through the full term before the next general election might be good for the ruling government if it could use the time to gain the *rakyat's* confidence.

On the other hand, he added, the ruling government might be bogged down with excessive demands from certain groups.

To suggestions that the various handouts by the Government were merely "throwing money to buy people's confidence and support", he said anyone was free to make any assumption.

"If highway tolls are abolished, the poor people won't benefit as they don't travel much and if pet-rol is (heavily) subsidised, the rich will benefit. Direct cash aid, like BR1M, goes directly to those in need.

"In rural areas, you give RM500, they appreciate it but in urban areas, the RM500 may be spent on a night's dinner," he said.

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