

'Think tank' for projects

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BANGI, Tues. — Datuk Seri, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad today suggested the formation of a consultative body to ensure that development programmes conformed with Islamic values.

He said the proposed body should comprise Government officers, scholars and Islamic professional groups who would examine and make assessments on Islamic values so that the findings could be used as a basis for drawing up development programmes.

He added that the consultative body could give first and second opinions besides making the necessary modifications to technology which, until today, had been imported from the West.

The Acting Prime Minister was speaking at the opening of the national seminar on Development Concept in Islam at the Universiti Kebangsaan here.

He said due attention should be given to the Islamic socio-economic monitoring system in case the recommendations towards modifying development structure according to Islamic values could be tested.

On criticisms by religious leaders against Government development projects, Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir said they should offer alternative suggestions rather than merely criticising whatever weaknesses there were in the present system.

scholars and Muslim and bumiputra intellectuals which will bring benefit not only in this present world but also in the hereafter.

"I feel that the holding of the seminar on Development Concept in Islam now is appropriate," he added.

He said the Government would launch the Fourth Malaysia Plan shortly which would extend the previous efforts taken by the Government to develop the nation and its people.

He said that looking at the successes in implementing development projects in the past, it was evident that more concerted effort was needed.

Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir said the people should complement the efforts made by the Government and utilise whatever opportunities created through the various development programmes.

He said it was important that discussions on the relationship between development and Islam be held to eliminate any doubt and misconception regarding their relationship.

He added this was especially so in view of the fact that more and more Muslims in Malaysia were giving greater thought towards issues related to Islam and religion.

Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir said such views would only result in bringing about a situation of non-action.

He said religious values did not represent negative factors in efforts towards development.

Islam was a way of life and as such all aspects in carrying out daily activities could be suited to Islamic teachings.

Similarly, he said, whatever development projects carried out by the Government were meant to improve the livelihood of the people in conformity with the Islamic way of life.

He said it was imperative that steps were taken to include experts on Islam in any discussion on development plans.

"If we can find consultants in various professional fields, we can also find experts on religious studies.

"Such officials can be engaged to offer advice on Government development projects," he added.

First step

He said although discussions on efforts in improving the livelihood of bumiputras had been held frequently, bumiputra development according to Islamic principles had rarely been discussed.

"This seminar is the first step towards studying in depth the development of the Muslim community or bumiputras, laying emphasis on the Islamic philosophy and concepts which must be understood by leaders, planners, implementors, administrative officers,

"This development is encouraging, but it also requires that whatever development that is being carried out is not done in a manner that is contradictory to Islam," he said.

He added there were groups that purposely misinterpreted the relationship between development and Islam.

They stressed that Islam was conservative, out of date and did not fit in with development, he said.

These groups cited whatever failures there were as examples for their argument.