

MAHATHIR - ISLAM

83 (P)  
KUALA LUMPUR, JUNE 12 (BERNAMA)-- THE PRIME MINISTER, DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD, TODAY URGED COUNTRIES WITH MUSLIM MINORITIES TO RECIPROCATE THE FULLEST DEGREE OF AUTONOMY AND TOLERANCE ACCORDED TO NON-MUSLIMS IN ISLAMIC NATIONS.

HE SAID IT WAS UNFORTUNATE THAT MUSLIM MINORITIES IN MANY PARTS OF THE WORLD HAD NOT BEEN ACCORDED SIMILAR TOLERANCE WHICH ISLAM ACCORDS TO NON-MUSLIMS.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID: +THE MUSLIM MINORITIES SEEK ONLY TOLERANCE FROM THE NON-MUSLIM MAJORITY; NOTHING MORE THAN THE RIGHT TO LIVE, WORSHIP, PRACTISE THEIR WAY OF LIFE AND DIE IN DIGNITY THAT BEFITS EVERY HUMAN BEING.+

THE PRIME MINISTER STRESSED THAT JUSTICE AND FAIRNESS SHOWN BY THE MUSLIM MAJORITY COUNTRIES IN DEALING WITH THEIR NON-MUSLIM CITIZENS MUST AFFECT THE WELL-BEING OF MUSLIM MINORITIES.

HE WAS ADDRESSING SOME 100 DELEGATES AND OBSERVERS FROM 16 COUNTRIES WHEN OPENING THE FIRST MEETING OF THE REGIONAL ISLAMIC DAKWAH COUNCIL OF SOUTH-EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (RISEAP) HERE. --BERNAMA MORE 1258/AH

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THE PRIME MINISTER CALLED ON MUSLIMS LIVING AS MINORITIES NOT TO REGARD THEIR MINORITY STATUS AS SOMETHING NEGATIVE OR RESTRICTIVE BUT INSTEAD TO TAKE COGNIZANCE OF THE COUNTRY'S SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT AND ADHERE TO THE VALUES AND STANDARDS OF ISLAM.

IT IS ESTIMATED THAT IN THE SOUTH-EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC REGION ALONE, THERE ARE ABOUT 250 MILLION MUSLIMS AND THERE ARE ONLY THREE COUNTRIES IN THE REGION - INDONESIA, MALAYSIA AND BRUNEI - WHERE MUSLIMS FORM THE MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID THAT ALTHOUGH IN THE OTHER 17 COUNTRIES IN THE REGION MUSLIMS ARE MINORITIES, IT WAS CLEAR THAT THEY WISHED TO MAINTAIN THEIR ISLAMIC IDENTITY.

TOWARDS THIS END, THEY HAD TO FACE MANY CHALLENGES AND DIFFICULTIES BUT ISLAM HAD SHOWN A RESILIENCE AND POWER WHICH ENABLE ITS ADHERENTS TO HOLD FAST TO THEIR FAITH EVEN IN THE MOST ADVERSE CIRCUMSTANCES, HE SAID.

WHAT WAS IMPORTANT, HE SAID, WAS THAT AS MUSLIMS, THEY MUST UPHOLD AND PRACTISE THE TRUE TEACHINGS OF ISLAM WHOSE OBJECTIVE IS UNIVERSAL GOOD, EQUALITY AND PROGRESS. --BERNAMA MORE 1305/AH

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THE PRIME MINISTER STRESSED THAT THE PROPER INTERPRETATIONS AND PRACTICES OF ISLAM MUST BE UNIVERSAL AND + MUST OVERSHADOW, IF NOT OBLITERATE, OBSCURANTIST AND DEVIATIONIST PRACTICES.+

SUCH PRACTICES TEND TO PUT ISLAM TO RIDICULE OR CREATE FEAR AMONG OTHERS AND SO PREVENT THE SPREAD AND ADVANCEMENT OF ISLAM AND MUSLIMS, HE SAID.

THE PRIME MINISTER CALLED ON MUSLIMS EVERYWHERE TO BE CONSCIOUS OF THE RESURGENCE OF ISLAM AND THEY MUST PLAY THEIR PART OR ELSE THEY ONCE AGAIN MIGHT LOSE THE INITIATIVE.

MUSLIMS MUST LEAD, AND NOT BE LED POSSIBLY TOWARDS THEIR OWN DESTRUCTION, AND LESSONS MUST BE LEARNT FROM WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO SOME RELIGIONS OLDER THAN ISLAM, HE SAID.

+LET US NOT DELUDE OURSELVES INTO THINKING THAT THE RAVAGES OF TIME CANNOT HAVE THE SAME EFFECT ON ISLAM. WE MUST PREPARE OURSELVES TO COUNTER THE TOTAL MATERIALISM OF ALIEN IDEOLOGIES AND BELIEFS.+ -- BERNAMA  
MORE 1310/SZ

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DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID ISLAM HAD RESCUED THE WORLD FROM THE DARK AGES AND THEN LAUNCHED IT ON THE MODERN COURSE RESULTING IN THE MODERN CIVILISATION.

WITH THE RESURGENCE OF ISLAM AND THE TREMENDOUS ECONOMIC WEALTH AT THE COMMAND OF MUSLIM NATIONS THE STAGE WAS SET FOR A SECOND RESCUE OF THE WORLD, HE SAID.

THIS TIME THERE SHOULD BE A BETTER APPROACH SO THAT THE SPIRITUAL VALUES WERE MAINTAINED ALONG WITH THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ADVANCEMENT OF THE WORLD.

EARLIER, RISEAP PRESIDENT TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN THANKED THE GOVERNMENT FOR ITS STRONG SUPPORT WHICH ENABLED THE ORGANISATION TO OPERATE ITS HEADQUARTERS IN KUALA LUMPUR.

HE PLEDGED TO SEE TO IT THAT RISEAP WOULD BE A LIVING FORCE IN THE PURSUIT OF ISLAMIC IDEALS THROUGH PEACEFUL AND HUMANITARIAN MISSIONARY MOVEMENT.

DELEGATES FROM AUSTRALIA, BRUNEI, BURMA, FIJI, HONG KONG, INDONESIA, JAPAN, KOREA, NEW CALEDONIA, NEW ZEALAND, PAPUA NEW GUINEA, THE PHILIPPINES, SINGAPORE, THAILAND, TAIWAN AND MALAYSIA ARE PRESENT FOR THE TWO-DAY MEETING. -- BERNAMA 1315/SZ