

MAHATHIR-ISLAM

83 (P)  
PETALING JAYA, JUNE 4 (BERNAMA)--( DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TODAY CRITICISED THE WESTERN MEDIA FOR THEIR PRESENTATION OF ISLAM WHICH HE SAID IS AIMED AT CAUSING MISUNDERSTANDING AND FEAR.

+IT IS UNFORTUNATE THAT THE SOPHISTICATION IN COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY IS NOT BEING APPLIED TO CREATING BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF ISLAM, THE RELIGION OF A THOUSAND MILLION PEOPLE,+ THE PRIME MINISTER SAID.

RATHER, IT WAS USED TO CREATE FEARS AND PREJUDICES AGAINST THE RELIGION AND ITS FOLLOWERS, HE ADDED WHEN OPENING THE SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE REGIONAL ISLAMIC DAKWAH COUNCIL OF SOUTHEAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (RISEAP). DELEGATES FROM 16 COUNTRIES AND SIX INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS ARE ATTENDING THE ONE-DAY CONFERENCE.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE WESTERN MEDIA, THROUGH IGNORANCE AND MALICIOUS DISTORTIONS, HAD CREATED AN IMAGE OF ISLAM AS A RELIGION THAT DID NOT NEED TO BE UNDERSTOOD AND ONLY NEED TO BE FEARED. -- MORE 1601/OM  
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HE SAID IT WAS WRONG FOR THESE BIASED CRITICS TO IMPLY THAT THE FOSTERING OF AN ISLAMIC WAY OF LIFE WOULD ENDANGER THE RIGHTS OF NON-MUSLIMS.

AN OBJECTIVE READING OF HISTORY WOULD SHOW THAT THE ISLAMIC SYSTEM GUARANTEED PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF NON-MUSLIM MINORITIES WHO, SINCE THE DAYS OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD, HAD BEEN PUT ON PAR WITH THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY.

DATUKSERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THERE WERE EXTREMISTS IN EVERY RELIGION AND IDEOLOGY AND IT WAS WRONG TO POINT TO THE FEW FANATICS IN ISLAM AS EVIDENCE THAT IT WAS A FAITH TO BE FEARED.

TAKING WESTERN +EXPERTS+ ON ISLAM TO TASK, HE SAID THESE PEOPLE WERE IGNORANT OF EVEN THE MOST BASIC OF ISLAMIC TEACHINGS ON

MAJOR ISSUES FACING MANKIND.

+THEY DO NOT EVEN HAVE THE BASIC WORKING KNOWLEDGE OF ISLAMIC HISTORY AND CURRENT AFFAIRS.+ --MORE 1620/MD

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CITING AN EXAMPLE, HE QUOTED A RECENT BOOK ON +MILITANT ISLAM+ BY JANSON WHICH SAID THAT IN MALAYSIA, PARTLY UNDER IRANIAN INFLUENCE, MUSLIM FUNDAMENTALISTS WERE THROWING THEIR TELEVISION SETS INTO THE RIVER AND RIPPING THE COMFORTABLE UPHOLSTERY FROM THEIR CARS AND REPLACING IT WITH WOODEN BENCHES.

+I WOULD LIKE TO INVITE HIM (THE AUTHOR) TO CONDUCT A THOROUGH SEARCH OF MALAYSIAN RIVERS FOR DUMPED TELEVISION SETS AND HIGHWAYS FOR CARS WITH WOODEN SEATS,+ DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID.

HE SAID THE MALAYSIAN GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH AN ISLAMIC BANK AND AN INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY TO FOSTER POSITIVE VALUES IN KEEPING WITH ISLAMIC TEACHINGS HAD ALSO BEEN CRITICISED AND MISINTERPRETED BY THE INTERNATIONAL MEDIA.

HE SAID EFFORTS TO DISCREDIT THE ISLAMIC RESURGENCE AND THE ISLAMIC WAY OF LIFE WOULD CONTINUE AS LONG AS MUSLIMS HOLD FIRMLY TO THEIR VALUES AND INSTITUTIONS, FREE FROM ANY SUPER POWER INFLUENCE. --MORE 1642/MD

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MUSLIMS, INCLUDING THOSE IN COUNTRIES WHERE THEY ARE A MINORITY, MUST FIND WAYS TO COUNTER THE +DISINFORMATION+ ABOUT ISLAM CARRIED OUT BY THE SO-CALLED PROTAGONISTS OF THE FREE PRESS, HE ADDED.

HE SAID IT WAS EQUALLY NECESSARY FOR NON-MUSLIMS TO EXAMINE THE MESSAGE OF ISLAM WITH OPENESS AND WITHOUT PREJUDICE.

+IF ISLAM HAS NOTHING TO OFFER, WHY WORRY ABOUT IT? IF IT HAS SOMETHING TO OFFER, WHY DENY IT TO OURSELVES?+ HE ASKED.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THAT ABOUT 200 MUSLIMS FROM HONG KONG, SOUTH KOREA, JAPAN AND TAIWAN WERE EXPECTED TO PERFORM THE HAJ THIS YEAR UNDER AN ARRANGEMENT WITH RISEAP, THE MALAYSIAN AIRLINE SYSTEM (MAS) AND THE MALAYSIAN PILGRIMS MANAGEMENT AND FUNDS BOARD (TABUNG HAJI).

LAST YEAR, TABUNG HAJI PROVIDED FACILITIES FOR ABOUT 150 MUSLIMS FROM COUNTRIES WHERE THEY ARE A MINORITY TO PERFORM THE PILGRIMAGE. --BERNAMA 1700/MD