

PM calls for study on second haj

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. -- The Prime Minister tonight called for a study of the religious, social and economic implications of Malaysians performing the haj more than once.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Pilgrims Fund and Management Board (Tabung Haji) and other relevant bodies should conduct such a study.

He said this study should not be limited to the religious aspects but should also cover the effects on the pilgrims themselves, on society, the national economy, and on the security situation in Saudi Arabia.

"As we all know, Prophet Muhammad himself performed the haj only once in his lifetime.

"We go to Mecca for a second time if we are able to and if we think the first pilgrimage did not go that well."

Dr Mahathir was speaking at a ceremony in recognition of the contributions of past Tabung Haji staff at Bangunan Tabung Haji here.

He said those who performed the haj more than once could be advised that helping the poor, paying for religious projects and similar efforts were also noble.

"I hope this study will be comprehensive and in-depth to avoid misunderstanding.

"If any misunderstanding arises, there will arise allegations that would finally bring

about negative viewpoints. This suggestion should be viewed with an open mind."

The Prime Minister said if the habit of performing the pilgrimage more than once was rampant, it should be stressed to Muslims that there were other noble works to be done with excess income.

He said his suggestion should not be interpreted as an encouragement to spend excess income on worldly things but rather on matters encouraged by Islam.

Besides, he said, if such a study was to be conducted, the views of other Islamic institutions should be sought so that there would be conformity in any guide drawn up as a result.

Personal savings

Dr Mahathir lamented that only 1.2 million out of the seven million Muslims in Malaysia had savings with Tabung Haji. More Muslims should open accounts, he said.

He also expressed disappointment with the level of personal savings with Tabung Haji. The average amount per person is between \$400 and \$500.

He called for measures to encourage Muslims to save more with Tabung Haji and reach an average of at least \$1,000 per person.

He said the rise of Islam in this day and age should also cover the fields of economy, education and politics.

He said he was glad to note that non-Muslims were among the invited guests of tonight's ceremony. This was only proper as Tabung Haji also used the services of non-Muslims in its efforts to achieve its objective, he said.

"This also sets a good example because recently there are certain quarters saying that co-operating and learning from non-Muslims was against Islam," he said.

"Such statements are not based on the true teachings of Islam and will weaken Muslims themselves.

"Muslims will not go anywhere if we only depend on the knowledge and experiences gained among ourselves."