

# Dr M tells Muslims: Change with the times

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. -- Islam is a religion for all times and places, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said, but added that it would be difficult to defend this belief if there are attempts to practise it the way the Arabs did 1,400 years ago.

The Prime Minister said there were some people who were trying to do exactly this. He said the fear caused by these people over a sizeable section of the Muslim population had made Muslims backward, easily suppressed and used by non-Muslim forces.

Dr Mahathir said this when launching the corporatised *zakat* collecting system at the Sulaiman Building here today.

He added that Islamic civilisation could be promoted if Muslims spent less time talking about Islamic theories, and instead practised what they preached or what had been correctly preached to them.

The Prime Minister said societies which relied on, and were fed only with, theories and concepts without concrete planning and action would remain backward and weak.

This is not Islam's objective or the destiny charted for Muslims, he said.

Dr Mahathir said the teachings of Islam as conveyed to Muslims must be put into practice, adding that the time and energy spent on polemics could best be used for concrete work.

By spending too much time on theories, Muslim societies would achieve little and would fail to attain the level of Islamic civilisation they dream of, he said.

Dr Mahathir said a nation did not attain civilisation and advancement overnight but achieved them by being creative, open, inquisitive, innovative and receptive to new ideas besides maintaining high morality.

He said exhortations by certain sectors that Muslims should preoccupy themselves with only spiritual obligations and neglect hard work and use of intellect only made them weak and unsuccessful.

"This is what certain peo-

ple are trying to do. They have instilled fear in most Muslims that no one dares to question their teachings. Because of this, Muslims are backward, easily victimised and exploited by non-Muslim powers," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said the teachings by some people that Muslims practised the religion faithfully and relied heavily on prayers (*doa*) without backing this with hard work would also weaken the Muslim community.

He said it would be meaningful for Muslims to concentrate on what was required of them religiously without disregarding the changes that took place throughout the ages.

The Prime Minister drew the audience's attention to some of these changes. For instance, it is now no longer practical for intending pilgrims to use the camel for their *haj* trip.

In the days of the Prophet, those who wished to perform the *haj* would use the camel as the main mode of transportation. But it was no longer practical following the spread of Islam outside Mecca, he said.

When intending pilgrims travelled by air, some people interpreted that this was not in keeping with the Prophet's traditions. This was a source of lengthy polemics among religious scholars, he said.