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Mahathir-Islam (With pi x)

ISLAMIC CLERGY MUST FORM PROGRESSIVE MUSLIM COMMUNITY, SAYS MAHATHIR

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KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 10 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the nation's Muslim clergy must strive to form an Islamic community that was progressive and able to develop, administer and defend the religion and country.

They should not limit their responsibilities to religious duties only but also mould an attitude suited to assimilation of expertise and other skills, he added.

In all fields of knowledge, there should be a Muslim who was an expert, he said when opening a national course for Muslim clergy at the National Institute of Public Administration (INTAN) in Bukit Kiara here.

He added: +So too, among the Muslim nations there must be one that can protect Muslims wherever they are. This is also part of +fardu kifayah+ (collective religious obligations).

+The time has come to once again expand the scope of the clergy to suit modern times and the problems faced by Muslims .+ -- more

▼10/12/12-51MST

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Mahathir-Islam 2 Kuala Lumpur

Dr Mahathir said scant attention was given to moulding the Muslim individual and their achievement which could enhance the image of Muslims to command the respect of other communities,

As such, the development of Muslims and Islamic countries also were not considered part of the expansion of Islam, that is, part of missionary duties, he added.::

He said: +Be that as it may, clarification of the -true situation of Muslims today is important because the responsibility to form a Muslim being as a whole cannot be divorced from Islamic evangelism.+

As example, he said. Islamic evangelism in its present form held no meaning for the Muslims in Somalia and Bosnia because in their present situation there was no religious obligation they could perform if defending themselves was not considered such a.n obligation.

They needed to be physically rehabilitated before they could practice their religious duties, he added.

Dr Mahathir said: +The fact is,, because Muslims throughout the world are so weak, they are incapable of rehabilitating their fellow Muslims.-- more

▼10/12/12-59MST

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+And, this- is because formation of a Muslim being entrusted to the clergy is restricted to things that do not give priority to mental and physical development, worldly knowledge and their efficiency.

This came about because clergy in centuries past failed to give attention to a wider scope as was the case by those who came before them who encouraged knowledge to expand the Islamic realm and to administer it with efficiency.

+Their abilities also brought respect for Islam', Muslims and Muslim countries. But clergy like these are difficult to find today. That is why we must recreate clergy like these,+ he added.

He said, however, that efforts to revive such evangelists must be adapted to the times and they should not pose problems to the Muslim community by being extreme and divisive and deceiving the people through teachings that could further weaken already weak Muslim nations.

+It is not the duty of the clergy to assess the piety of certain people with the intention to attack them or cause their downfall,+ he added.

Their true work is to correct the religious practices with wisdom so as to prevent disunity, he said. -- more

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Dr Mahathir said the government placed high hope on evangelism because Malaysia wanted to become an Islamic country, capable of defending Muslims and Muslim countries.

To achieve that objective, much depended on the understanding and practice towards teachings of the clergy.

+Not only the piety of a Muslim but also their success and failure are among the responsibilities of the national clergy,+ he added. As such, the clergy must, consider their work as a noble religious obligation which cannot be founded on self-interest.

He said the glaring disrespect of non-Muslims towards Muslims today was not the result of the religion itself but the attitude and achievement of Muslims which did not follow the teachings.

**This** should not be taken lightly by Muslims, especially the clergy, because the attitude of ignoring the belittlement shows that Muslims were not practising the teachings as part of their responsibility was to develop the religion. -- more

▼10/12/13-36MST

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Dr Mahathir regretted that Muslims were not only unfriendly towards each other but were willing to block efforts to save their brethren from starvation caused by non-Muslims because they were more interested in grabbing power for their own factions.

He said Muslims who were successful in worldly pursuits, like inventing sophisticated goods, should not stay aloof of evangelical activities because they were, more able to perform religious obligations like paying tithes and performing the Hajj.

Dr Mahathir also touched on the emergence of extremist groups which set their own criteria about Islam and indirectly became the tools of the religion's enemies.

Their attempts to topple the governments of Islamic countries through aggression merely succeeded in, weakening the victim nation and obstructing its progress, thus disabling it from competing with non-Muslim developed countries. -- more

▼10/12/13-37MST

CNS8280

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He said: +These Muslim nations become more backward, their revenue is dependent, on non-Muslim countries and **they** lose their freedom.+ That was why when Muslims were attacked by the enemies of Islam, not one Muslim country was able to help.

He added: +The combined group of all Muslim countries also is incapable of doing anything. All of them are so weak and so dependent or tied to other countries that they are, paralysed.

+We are saddened, we complain and we blame **the** enemies of Islam. But Muslims cannot, consider themselves free from blame. In fact, they are more to blame than others.+ -- Hernama

▼10/12/13-39MST