

# PM: Muslim nations should be united

By Ahmad A. Talib

PETALING JAYA, Sat. — Muslim countries should stop getting into deep discussions over trivial matters and instead work towards strengthening their all-round resilience, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

The Prime Minister said a divided Muslim community would not have any influence in the world, let alone contribute towards a peace-

ful environment in which all nations could prosper harmoniously.

"Let's get down to brass tacks. We must be realistic in our approaches and accept the fact that we are backward in many ways. This can easily be seen in that we have to depend on others for a lot of things.

"Islam brought us respect in the old days, when we were at the forefront of science, research and development. If we want the same

degree of respect, then we must be worthy of it.

"The only way to earn that respect is through sheer hard work and close co-operation, not through endless deliberations without any significant action."

Dr Mahathir said this at an hour-long dialogue with participants of the seventh international conference of the World Assembly of Muslim Youth here.

After brief opening remarks, Dr Mahathir took on

a number of questions from the floor whose topics range from Vision 2020 and Islamic unity to the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), the role of the United Nations in today's fast-changing environment and future trends in the Islamic world.

The Prime Minister said many Muslims were retreating from the realities of life, and this had made them weak. In some countries, Muslims were incapable of governing their nations, re-

sulting in widespread poverty and starvation.

Some Muslims cared little of what others thought of the religion. Many were happy just to practise it, ignoring along the way the religion's demands for a productive life.

Dr Mahathir reminded the participants that, being youth leaders, they had a heavy responsibility ahead

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## Need to strengthen unity of OIC members

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of them. The future of the Islamic world partly depended on them, particularly on how they move ahead to restore the glory of Islam.

Asked for his views on the OIC, especially in the area of R&D, the Prime Minister said it had not been active as it should be. But he said Malaysia was always willing to work on R&D with anyone even outside OIC auspices.

"We're interested in furthering the cause of Islam. There are plenty of good, eminent researchers in the Islamic world. We should be able to attract them, but we need to be pragmatic as well.

"We cannot allow politi-

cal interference to stand in the way of much-needed research work. We must not deviate from our work. We must spend less time on irrelevant pursuits.

"If we fail in our work, then we can expect to be oppressed by others. It is sad when we find ourselves labouring over the same issues for years without coming to some conclusion."

Asked whether it was more beneficial for Muslim countries to work outside the UN in the search for justice against some of today's atrocities against the *ummah*, the Prime Minister said working within the UN was better than outside it.

Islamic countries need to prick the conscience of oth-

er UN members, and this is best done from within. He said the weaknesses of the Islamic countries gave them no strength to act outside the UN.

One way of getting some strength is by being united, the Prime Minister said, arguing that as long as the Muslims were weak, it was far better to work within the UN.

As for the OIC, the Prime Minister said the association needed to be more active in order to serve effectively. Many OIC members were too inward-looking, he said, adding that this had led others to neutralise some of the OIC's efforts to seek a common position on certain issues.