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Mahathir-Islam

From Abdul Rahman Sulaiman

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TEHERAN, April 5 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad held heart-to-heart discussions with Iranian spiritual leader Ayatollah Syed Ali Khamenei and ulamak here last night on Islam.

He spoke about the importance for Muslim leaders and people all over the world to be united in redeeming Muslim dignity. *It is a very rare*

Muslims must constantly strive to achieve a command of knowledge in order to be respected by the world, he said.

Dr Mahathir, who is here for an official visit, also spoke about the grand Islamic civilisation of old which clearly proved its ability to influence the world through a credible, wise and knowledgeable leadership.

He told the ulamak that, as a Muslim, he was deeply saddened by the disunity of Muslims which made them weak and incapable to the extent they had to depend on aid from non-Muslim powers or be haunted by the enemies of Islam as was the case in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

He wanted to see Muslims set aside their petty quarrels, like differences of opinion over an issue, in the interest of achieving the higher objective of Muslim peace and prosperity. -- more

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Dr Mahathir pledged that despite being a small country Malaysia would do all it could to achieve that objective.

A spokesman of the Malaysian Embassy here said the ulamak fully agreed with the Dr Mahathir's views and promised to take steps to strive for the same objective.

They informed Dr Mahathir that they held high respect for Malaysia as an Islamic country which truly strived to improve the standard of living and peace of its people.

Earlier, in the afternoon, Dr Mahathir visited the grave of Iran's revolutionary leader, Ayatollah Ruhullah Khomeini in Behest-e-Zahra, near here, before travelling by road to Qom, a historical city and birthplace of Khomeini, about 150km from here.

In Qom, he met other religious officials as well as 18 Malaysians studying at a madarasah there.

In a brief speech to the students, Dr Mahathir advised them to remember their responsibilities as citizens of Malaysia. -- more

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"You must always avoid from being influenced by negative elements but give full attention to your pursuit of knowledge," he told them.

He also asked them to help the government in its efforts to strengthen Muslim unity when they returned to the country on completion of their studies.

A representative of the students Mohamed Daud told the Prime Minister they were in Iran to seek religious knowledge.

He said their studies included shite matters but he assured Dr Mahathir that it did not mean that they would be influenced by the teachings as they remained from the "sunnah" school.

During the meeting, the students requested government assistance to build a student centre in Qom.

Dr Mahathir said the government would look into their request.

Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhammad Haji Muhammad Taib, who accompanied the Prime Minister, donated US\$500 (RM1,300) to the students.

-- Bernama

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▼05/04/12-09MST