

Acquire knowledge defend faith, PM tells

By Jeffrey Ramayah

PETALING JAYA, Tues. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Muslims must realise their acquisition of knowledge and skills, intellectual and material wealth is part of their means to preserve their faith.

The Prime Minister said this was a part of their religious practice and their way of life.

"The Quran is clear on the issue of poverty. Poverty is one step before losing faith. And we must remember that poverty is not concerned only with material things but intellectual and other skills also," he said.

Dr Mahathir was addressing undergraduates and academic staff of the International Islamic University here.

His first official visit to the university, which was established in 1983, was in conjunction with its 10th anniversary celebrations.

Dr Mahathir said the life of a Muslim is totally governed by the teachings of Islam and "life must include what we do for a living, what we do for our defence and the defence of Islam and what we do to enhance the position of Islam, its spread and respect for it".

"To do all these involves skills and knowledge. The Prophet was known for his business skills and his wisdom in worldly matters.

"This contributed to the respect the communities in Mecca and Medina had for him and to his eventual success in carrying the Message. The Prophet was knowledgeable in the affairs of everyday life as much as he was knowledgeable in religion," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the IIU has shown that an Islamic university, properly conceived, could achieve a level of excellence on par with the more established universities in this region and elsewhere.

He said there was no doubt this achievement was due, in large measure, to the vision and wisdom of its academic staff and management.

The Prime Minister said there has always been, within a Muslim country, a belief that an Islamic university must be concerned exclusively with the study of Islam.

"One can perhaps understand this narrow view where other religions are

NS1 2 5 AUG 1993

concerned, for they do not regard religion as a way of life," he said.

"Islam is not just a belief, a faith. Islam is a way of life. A way of life that encompasses all that one does during one's lifetime must include command of all the knowledge that can contribute to it.

"Such is the importance of all knowledge in Islam that we are enjoined in *Surah Al-Ghashiyah* that we must observe the mountains and the camels.

"Obviously these are examples of Allah's creations and equally obviously, they have a bearing on life.

"To observe is to study and no limits are placed on

FULL TEXT ON P12

the extent of our study of these creations of Allah."

Dr Mahathir said surely Islam is a religion that positively exhorts Muslims to study what surrounds them and constitutes a part of life and added that such studies constitute the sciences, for what else can result from our observation if not scientific knowledge.

"Yet there are Muslims who would have us confine learning and knowledge solely to the study of the teachings and the interpretations of Islamic theology and Islamic laws.

"And so an Islamic university must not confine itself solely to theology. All the subjects that are being taught in other universities must be taught with equal thoroughness in the Islamic university."

and skills to
students