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Mahathir-Religion

MORE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN RELIGIONS THAN DIFFERENCES, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept. 13 (Bernama) -- ^{MS} Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said comparative analyses of major world religions should logically conclude with more similarities rather than differences.

This was because all major world religions strove for the establishment of good while rejecting all that could lead to rancour and destruction, the Prime Minister said in his message in the souvenir programme of a seminar on the role and influence of religion which began today.

The four-day seminar, jointly organised by the Institute of Islamic Understanding (IKIM) and Goethe Institute, was opened by the Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Ahmad Sarji Abdul Hamid.

Dr Mahathir also expressed the hope that a serious effort be made towards identifying more points of agreement while a common stand was established against matters that were potentially disruptive to the achievement of a peaceful and understanding world.

He also congratulated IKIM and the Goethe Institute for their initiative in holding the seminar on "The Role and Influence of Religions in Society".

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Dr Mahathir is scheduled to deliver his keynote address at the seminar tomorrow.

In his speech, Ahmad Sarji said despite the similarities that existed between Islam and Christianity "sometimes we witness great differences between both."

The differences, he noted, were not only in terms of their behaviour towards one another but also in terms of their treatment towards one another.

"Islam is the first religion which has treated peaceful co-existence as the foundation of collective life," he said.

According to Islam, there was no compulsion in matters of belief and it was a matter of the mind and the heart, he added.

IKIM Director-General Datuk Dr Ismail Ibrahim, in his welcoming address, said the world was witnessing the re-emergence of the importance of religion in society.

The unsecularisation of the world, he said, was one of the dominant social facts of life in the late 20th century. -- more

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Goethe Institute Kuala Lumpur Director Dr Matthias Rick said the seminar was not meant to make a comparison between Islam and Christianity but rather to discuss the influence of religions on societies.

Malaysian and German scholars would be seeking to uncover the basic religious elements, visible or hidden, conscious or unconscious which guide and shape societies, he added. -- Bernama

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