

# PM: Muslims can only progress with wider knowledge

KUALA TERENGGANU, Sun. Muslims should not only equip themselves with religious knowledge but also gain knowledge in other disciplines, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said knowledge of other disciplines such as science, mathematics and management would enable Muslims to progress further and contribute to nation-building.

With such knowledge, he said, Muslims would be able to build a strong nation, defend themselves and the religion as well as win the respect of other nations.

"When emphasis is given only to religious knowledge, an Islamic nation will become weak and Muslims will be unable to defend themselves and their religion," he said.

Dr Mahathir was speak-

ing at the closing of the seminar on "Islam and Vision 2020: Towards Improving the Quality of the Ummah" at Wisma Darul Iman, here. He later held a closed-door dialogue session with the participants.

Terengganu Menteri Besar Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad, Public Enterprises Minister Datuk Dr Yusof Nor, Deputy Primary Industries Minister Tengku Datuk Mahmud Mansor and State Executive Council members were also present.

Dr Mahathir said history showed that during the rise of Islam, Muslims were able to defend themselves and spread the religion to other nations because they were well equipped with the necessary tools.

"They used horses and swords then. In the modern era, we cannot defend ourselves unless we have tanks,

submarines and missiles. I don't think it is possible to defend ourselves with religious knowledge alone."

He said Muslims were now looked down upon by others because they were weak and were at the mercy of stronger nations. Most of the Islamic nations were also among the least developed nations.

"Development is not for ourselves but for our religion and the country. There is no point in upholding the integrity of the religion when we cannot defend it.

"If we love this nation, we have to dedicate ourselves to all efforts that can contribute towards development."

Dr Mahathir said that when Muslims were oppressed, there was a tendency for them to convert to other religions.

He added that in Malay-

sia, Malays were born Muslims. But of late, some had converted to other religions because they were disappointed and could not see the benefits of being Muslims or feel proud of the religion.

"That is why the success of Islam is important. We have to promote ourselves," he said, adding that the religion did not stop its followers from learning how to manage or participate in the economy or politics.

Dr Mahathir said Muslims in Malaysia were, however, more fortunate compared with those in other countries such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, where they were being oppressed.

He also criticised some Muslims who believed that they were more Islamic than others simply because they knew a bit more about the religion.