

Efficiency will earn respect, PM tells Muslims

Muslims

By Ahmad A. Talib

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — Muslims can earn universal respect by being efficient in the fields of administration, business and modern industries and by acquiring the widest possible knowledge in all areas, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said repeated reminders to improve the nation's economy did not mean that the Government was greedy or that it was only interested in material wealth.

"Wealth alone will not be able to protect the dignity of a nation, its people and religion. We all know this. What is meant by economic growth is a country's strength in the fields of administration, business and modern industries, apart from the acquisition of various forms of knowledge.

"Only after this has been done can Islam gain the respect of others."

The Prime Minister said this in his Maal Hijrah message. He said that colonisation did not end with independence, adding that a weak nation could still be subjected to indirect colonisation.

That was why the country needed economic strength and had to acquire knowledge and modern day know-how and skills.

"We often come across Muslims who lack the ability to administer a modern State. There is much corruption while the quality of management is poor. The legal system too is not organised. There seems to be no respect at all for time.

"All these help to lower the dignity of Islam and Muslims. God gave Muslims the same privileges as others. But if they fail, then they should not blame fate. Muslims fail because they do not stick closely to the teachings of Islam," Dr Mahathir said.

The Prime Minister said that millions of Muslims were oppressed, tortured and killed "and yet the one billion Muslims in the world are unable to do anything about it."

He said the reason for this was because the Muslims were weak, disunited and spent more time trying to determine their place and well-being in the hereafter.

"That is why many of us not only adhere to the compulsory teachings but create new ones as well, wear only certain attire and give undue importance to trivial

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Acquire knowledge to protect yourselves, says PM

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matters which subsequently help to disunite us further.

"Segregated by religious and secular divides, many Muslim leaders discourage the acquisition of knowledge which they label as secular even though such knowledge was pioneered and spread by Islamic scholars.

"This not only makes many Muslims having a narrow perspective of things, but also makes them weak, poor and easily influenced by others.

"But many Muslims are not embarrassed and ashamed when using the products created from the knowledge which they had earlier rejected, such as in the fields of defence and religious pursuits.

"Since we are dependent on the knowledge and industries owned by others, we are in no position to save Muslims who are oppressed unless we get the approval from our suppliers."

Dr Mahathir said the time had come for Muslims to take a candid look at these narrow perceptions which had not been helpful in enhancing Islam's image and dignity.

He added that it was vital for Muslims to acquire all forms of knowledge to protect themselves. The acquisition of knowledge should not be discouraged. In fact, Muslim youths should pursue knowledge seriously besides getting themselves educated on proper Islamic teachings, the Prime Minister said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had of late been made a model State for Muslims and other Islamic countries to follow. This acknowledgement should not make the country arrogant but its approaches in nation-building should not be dismissed either, he said.

"In fact, we should defend our approach in nation-building because this has helped us obtain the balance between the pursuits in the present world and the hereafter, as demanded by Islam."

Dr Mahathir reminded Muslims that the demands made on them were not anything that they could not achieve. He added that Muslims were required to be more hardworking, acquire skills and a greater degree of efficiency, and dedicate their lives to the religion, community and nation.

He said: "Hopefully, our efforts can help spur Muslims in other countries to also succeed in getting away from being controlled by others. Is this only a day-dream? Let's ponder this together ..."