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Mahathir-Islam  
DR MAHATHIR CALLS FOR NEW ISLAMIC RENAISSANCE

KUALA LUMPUR, June 17 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called for renewed efforts by Muslim nations for an Islamic renaissance to revive the glorious Islamic civilisation.

The mission was not impossible if they were prepared to acquire the relevant knowledge, the Prime Minister said.

He added there was a need to learn from history, change attitudes and refrain from dividing knowledge into those that was religious or secular in order to achieve the purpose.

Opening the World Islamic Civilisation Festival '94 (WICF) at the Islamic Centre here, Dr Mahathir said: "If we want to regain the glorious age of Islam we have a great need to learn from the founding and the spread of Islam. History is the greatest teacher."

Ministers and religious officers attended the opening of the four-month festival, the first of its kind ever organised in the country.

A priceless array of Islamic artifacts from more than 20 countries will be on display during the festival being held at four places -- Islamic Centre, National Planetarium, National Museum and National Art Gallery. --

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The countries are Britain, Brunei, China, Egypt, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iran, Italy, Jordan, Morocco, the Philippines, Qatar, Singapore, Spain, South Africa, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, the United States and Uzbekistan.

Recalling the glorious era of Islam, Dr Mahathir said though military strength and sophistication played a role, the lasting contributions of Muslims were in the fields of mathematics, science, medicine, astronomy and human knowledge.

He added: "This was possible because in the early period of Islam, the quest for knowledge was not restricted by narrow interpretations of the religion.

"In other words, the early Muslims followed closely the examples of the Prophet in leadership, in acquisition of wealth and knowledge while not neglecting the performance of the compulsory ibadah."

Dr Mahathir said the current situation was unfortunate, with the downgrading of knowledge that was regarded as non-religious and Muslim historians concentrated almost exclusively on the contribution of the spiritual. --

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To rebuild the glorious era, he said, there was a great need for the Muslims to debunk **some of the current beliefs that had contributed towards the decline.**

"Principal among these is the teaching that the world **-is not meant for the believers.** (Instead) it **is meant for** the non-believers to enjoy," he added.

Dr Mahathir said it **was** true that **some** of things which the non-believers enjoyed **were** things that Muslims should not hanker for but, he asked if it **was** true that **they** should not **benefit.** from the abundant bounty that God had bestowed.

"The world is not **a gift of Allah to the non-believers** but it is a gift to the believers." he said.

He added: "Unless and until **we stop dividing knowledge into religious and the secular, unless we regard all knowledge as faith enhancing and, therefore,** not only permissible but **vital** to Muslims and **their faith,** we are never ever going to rebuild Islamic civilisation.

**Worst still, we are going to remain, in the modern equivalent of the Dark Ages.**

"And **so, the first step towards an Islamic renaissance** is to debunk the belief that the world is not **For us,** that knowledge, other spiritual knowledge, is secular **and must:** be proscribed." -- more

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In building a modern Islamic civilisation, Dr Mahathir said it should **be** in the context of **the achievement.** of humanity at the **present time;** it should reflect contemporary life and thoughts which were relevant to modern times but still compatible with Islamic teachings.

"If we believe **that Islam -is** for all ages, then we will be contradicting **this** belief if we consider Islamic civilisation is possible only in the **7th** century of **the Christian era** in Madinah," he added.

Dr Mahathir also pointed out that **the** civilisation to **be** built should not be for the purpose of confronting other societies or civilisations.

**He said:** "It should contribute towards the **sumtotal** of human progress. It should show **compatibility** and balance between the spiritual and the **material,** between progress and moral values, between religion and worldly concerns .

"It should provide the alternative to a world that has so obviously lost its direction. It should be a viable and acceptable alternative, based on reasoned arguments rather than the blind faith in certain tendentious interpretations of Islam." -- more

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Speaking to reporters later, Dr Mahathir said it was sad that Muslim governments were weak and that anarchy or, at least, had governments prevailed in most Muslim countries today.

It was also saddening that Muslim countries had to seek assistance from non-Muslim governments and not their Muslim brothers in time of need, he added.

Dr Mahathir said establishing a new organisation of Islamic countries to replace the existing Organisation of Islamic Conference was not the answer for a stronger Islamic community.

Instead, every nation, including the small countries, must strengthen itself domestically by acquiring all the relevant knowledge, he added. --

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