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Mahathir-dakwah

DAKWAH ACTIVITIES SHOULD ALSO INCLUDE NON-MUSLIMS, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 12 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that dakwah activities should not be confined to Muslims but should include non-Muslims so that they can have a better understanding of Islam.

He said it was better for non-Muslims to understand the Islamic religion rather than for them to harbour suspicion and fear from lack of knowledge and understanding of the truth about the faith.

He said this when opening the 10th session of the Organisation of Islamic Conference's (OIC) Coordination Committee of Joint Islamic Action in the Field of Dakwah here.

Some 200 participants representing government and non-government organisations from OIC member countries are attending the three-day meeting.

The meeting will, among others, implement a resolution reached by OIC foreign ministers that a conference of all Islamic organisations be held in efforts to foster co-operation and coordination of action involving missionary activities.

Dr Mahathir said it was wrong for Muslims to disregard the impact on non-Muslims when carrying out dakwah activities among themselves.

Citing the example of Bilal, a black slave who was among the first persons to accept Islam, Dr Mahathir said Bilal became convinced of the faith because of the kindness of Prophet Muhammad who never adopted an uncaring attitude towards those who have doubts in the faith.

He said if Muslims were unconcerned about the opinion of non-Muslims of the religion, then Muslims were seen rejecting the injunctions of the religion to spread the faith.

The quality and completeness of the knowledge of Islam, said Dr Mahathir, was important to the ummah but the behaviour of the ummah was equally important in dakwah activities.

"While carrying out our duties in spreading the teachings among ourselves, we care very little whether Islam and the Muslims be respected by the non-believers. Many of us are merely concerned with spreading what we interpret as the true teachings.

"We seem to demand that Muslims do nothing else except the performance of the obligatory rituals and if they don't do these then we criticise them. We imply that they are wanting in piety. In extreme cases we reject them merely because they don't belong to a particular political party," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said the Muslim world was in turmoil and Muslims were fighting each other and they cannot agree even to co-operate to help themselves.

"And we are weak, unable to defend ourselves, and are frequently forced to side with those whose good intentions we doubt but whose support we need because we are weak," he said.

"If the learned among us are so poor that we cannot convince anyone that we are the best people; if the Muslim countries are so weak that we are completely dependent upon the charity and help of the non-Muslim powers; if it is obvious that we are willing to sell Islamic brotherhood in order to survive; if Islamic brotherhood becomes obviously a farce as we fight each other; can we really convince ourselves that we are following the correct teachings of Islam? Can we really convince others that Islam is

the right path?," he said.

Dr Mahathir said while Muslims were busy trying to make themselves more Islamic, many Muslims in conquered territories and those who have been forced to seek refuge in non-Muslim land have lost faith, have forsaken their religion and have even converted to other faiths.

"They suffer untold hardships and humiliation. And they come to us for help. Is it evidence of the goodness of Islam that we can offer them no help? Is it that we know, but we don't care as long as we can ensure heaven for us in the hereafter," he said.

Dr Mahathir said: "Is selfishness promoted by Islam that we think we can ignore the needs of our brothers because we are busy trying to gain merit for ourselves. Is it Islam which is wrong or is it our interpretation of Islam?."

He said that Muslims knew that poverty destroys faith but they (Muslims) do nothing about it, preferring to associate poverty with piety despite the teachings of the Quran that poverty was one step away from loss of faith. -- Bernama