

31 OCT 1996

Mahathir-Tilawah

MUSLIM COUNTRIES ADVISED NOT TO DEPEND ON AID

IPOH, Oct 31 (Bernama) -- Muslim countries will forever be tied down to the interests of non-Muslim nations for as long as they ask for aid from them, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"As the Muslim nations frequently ask for aid and submit to the wishes of the developed non-Muslim countries, the Islamic religion will also be humiliated," he said when opening the 39th national-level "Tilawah al-Quran" at Stadium Ipoh, here tonight.

He said for as long as the Muslim countries are backward, weak and deceive themselves by claiming that they do not need material progress, Islam will be humiliated and the countries ravaged.

"Since the Muslim countries are sadly backward, they are frequently oppressed or they have to seek protection from advanced countries," he added.

Dr Mahathir said Muslim countries are easily drawn into conflict with other Muslim countries which weaken them ultimately and when they fight among themselves they will again seek shelter from the developed non-Muslim countries.

The Prime Minister said the strong and developed Muslim countries can help to eliminate the misconception that Islam is an obstacle to progress.

He hit out at the opinion of some Muslims who propagate that Muslims should not strive for material progress because they claim that the progress for Muslims differ from that interpreted by the non-Muslims.

Such opinion will only strengthen the belief of some Muslims that they not only need not strive for progress but that progress is impossible for them in this world and as such they should not strive for it.

"In this development era, including the era of information explosion, religion becomes more important than it was during the era of limited information because in addition to constructive information, we also receive information today that can weaken and confuse and, in fact, destroy social morality and culture," he said.

"Religious teachings can become a protection wall for us against the adverse effects of negative information, and thus our community will be safe and will continue to progress and become strong," Dr Mahathir said.

Earlier in his speech, Perak Menteri Besar Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib said Muslims should talk less but work more and cooperate to make the community stronger.

He said they should also have an open mind, with strong integrity and the necessary skill for progress rather than bragging about truth and the splendour of Islam.

Twenty-nine participants as well as the two current champions are taking part in the five-day "Tilawah" ending Monday. -- BERNAMA

ZAB LAT AO