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Mahathir-Knowledge

DO NOT DISPUTE NATIONAL EDUCATION, SAYS MAHATHIR

KEPALA BATAS, April 22 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called on Muslims in the country not to dispute whether knowledge taught under the national education system is secular or otherwise.

He said they should view the knowledge offered as essential to strengthen the Muslims.

"Ability to master technologies and computers and the like will make others respect and do not look upon the Muslims," he said at a "tea with the people" gathering at Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama Al-Irshad near here.

"We can also help redeem the religion, people and nation's honour," he said.

The Prime Minister's wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and Pulau Pinang Chief Minister Tan Sri Koh Tsu Koon were among those present.

He said Muslims neglecting to acquire knowledge would be forever impoverished and had to beg for survival.

This would prevent them from performing their religious obligations and finally deprive them of what they aspired for in the after life, he said.

Mahathir said today Islam was lowly viewed as a religion of violence because Muslim countries were unable to master knowledge.

"If we are strong they will not dare say Islam teaches its followers to become violent," he said.

Mahathir said the Malays must work hard to master knowledge in order not to lag behind others.

He said Islam also taught its followers to be prepared to defend themselves and by mastering knowledge they could make various weapons like artillery, ships and submarines to defend Islam.

"If students in the country refuse to learn high technologies, the nation will be left behind and not able to defend the Muslims," he said.

Mahathir, who is Umno president, lambasted a local political party which claimed that Umno was not fighting for Islam but instead was more of a nationalist party.

Mahathir said Umno represented Malays in the country who were all Muslims and there was no need to brag about fighting for Islam.

"We do not want to claim that we are fighting for the Islamic world...it is sufficient to say that we are fighting for us (to develop the country)," he said.

Earlier, Koh presented Mahathir with a compact disc (CD) containing songs performed by a symphony orchestra in recognition of the various awards the Prime Minister received from the Pulau Pinang government.

At a news conference before leaving for Kuala Lumpur, Mahathir said certain people claimed that local university education was secular.

They were trying to influence students by organising various pre-dawn lectures which were not compulsory in Islam.

This had caused the undergraduates' failure to concentrate on their studies and achieve good results, he added. -- BERNAMA

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