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Mahathir-Muslim

MUSLIMS CAN CONTRIBUTE POSITIVELY TO MANKIND, SAYS DR M

PETALING JAYA, April 25 (Bernama) -- Muslims can be a force to contribute positively to the development of mankind in the 21st century, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Although it may be far-fetched, the scenario was not impossible, he said when addressing a symposium entitled "The Islamic World and Global Cooperation: Preparing for the 21st Century" here today.

"The 21st century is not relevant to Muslims. Its just a period in time but the 21st century will see many changes and Muslims will be a part of these changes whether they like it or not," he said.

Dr Mahathir stressed that it was better for the Muslims to face the 21st century with their eyes wide open and with a clear vision of what they wanted to do and the role they wished to play.

"And if they chose to play a constructive role while retaining the faith, their spiritual values and true brotherhood, they will be able to contribute positively to the development of mankind," he said.

The three-day symposium is jointly organised by the Oxford Centre For Islamic Studies (OCIS) and Institute of Islamic Understanding, Malaysia (Ikim).

Some 150 participants comprising politicians, academicians, corporate leaders, government officials and journalists are attending the symposium.

In his thought-provoking speech, Dr Mahathir also spoke at length on what used to be a great Muslim Empire that dominated the world.

He said it was natural for the Muslims to yearn after their past greatness, empire and dominance over the rest of the world.

"But they must know that imperialism is a thing of the past. Neither the Muslim empire nor the British empire or any empire can be resurrected," he said.

All that they could hope to aspire was to boost the development of independent Muslim countries to that of developed nations in the world, he said.

"This is not an impossible task," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Muslims could develop their respective countries without attempting to come together as an empire.

"Their loyalty to their own country should not extend to war against other Muslim nations purely due to national ambition," he said.

The Prime Minister said Muslim countries could also strengthen the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) and help its members in distress.

"They can coordinate and cooperate among themselves but not building empires," he said, adding that not a single Muslim country could be classified as developed.

"A number of them are very wealthy and endowed with natural resources. But almost all are lagging behind in modern knowledge, technological skills and in many instances effective government," he added. -- BERNAMA

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