

BE THANKFUL

Other countries ^{S 7-7-98} have worse problems, says PM

By WAN HAMIDIHAMID

KUALA LUMPUR: The current economic downturn has taught the people to be more calm and to act more positively, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

"We are thankful that our problems are not as bad as those in other countries which are facing riots, wars, natural disasters and other calamities," he said when launching the Maulidur Rasul celebration to mark Prophet Muhammad's birthday at Pusat Islam yesterday.

Urging Muslims to continue to strive for success although not all aims would be achieved overnight, the Prime Minister said it was everyone's responsibility to pray and not be greedy, corrupt, untrustworthy and impatient.

"At least the difficulties we are facing now will make us realise the greatness of Allah and we will pray to Him so that everything will be back to normal," he said.

"If Muslims are no longer successful, and even seen as obsolete, weak and dominated by others, the reason is that we do not accept Islam as a way of life," he said.

The Prime Minister said Islam should not be confined to rituals because it could not be a way of life if it was limited to certain form of prayers.

He added that Muslims could not live well without knowing the basics of living such as agriculture, fisheries, food production, health and medicine and knowledge and technologies.

"In the Quran, the environment, the hills, the clouds and the rain are mentioned many times. But the *ulamas* (Muslim scholars) rarely explain these things as if some of the Islamic teachings in the Quran are important while others can be put aside," he said.

"There seems to be less emphasis on these areas compared to attention given to religious laws, sex and women's issues and other related issues." Dr Mahathir said that if Muslims were oppressed, insulted and colonised directly or indirectly, it was because they did not accept Islam as a way of life.

He said some Muslims perceived Islam as the way to prepare for death but never thought the possibility of such a preparation might not be enough, as

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they had abandoned a substantial part of the Islamic teachings.

"Will we have a place in the after-world if we only practise half of the Islamic teachings?" ^{S 7-7-98}

"Wouldn't we be guilty of putting aside, or even rejecting part of our worldly life as required from us (by God)?"

Dr Mahathir said Muslims should instead strive harder than Prophet Muhammad — who during his life-

time, had worked hard and not merely prayed — because they were not the chosen prophets of God.

Calling on Muslims to utilise the gift of mind to strive for new ways and technologies, he said they must also continue to follow the Islamic teachings such as praying, fasting and other religious requirements.

Earlier, about 12,000 Muslims took part in a procession led by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Othman.