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Mahathir-Islam

MUSLIMS MUST UPGRADE THEMSELVES IN ALL FIELDS, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 20 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said Muslims, apart from enhancing their religious knowledge, should also acquire and present ideas in other fields.

The Prime Minister said Islam required the people to upgrade their knowledge in all fields.

"Lack of knowledge is not a part of the culture of Muslims. Even during the Islamic period previously, Muslims had a higher level of knowledge than others," he said when opening the new campus of Institut Profesional Baitulmal (IPB) at Kampung Pandan here.

At the ceremony, Dr Mahathir also launched the Federal Territory Mosque Development Foundation and the Book on Mosques in the World, Malaysia and Kuala Lumpur.

Present were his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, and Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Othman, who is also the chairman of the Federal Territory Islamic Affairs Council.

Commenting on a book on the Islamic era in Spain that he had read, Dr Mahathir said Muslims under the leadership of Abdul Rahaman the 1st, 2nd and 3rd brought progress to the country because they were knowledgeable in many fields.

However, after the reign of Abdul Rahman the 3rd, disputes and animosity rose among them because many of them began to have contradictory interpretations on Islam, he said.

"Some had sought help from enemies of Islam and as a result the Islamic empire in Spain became weaker and backward. That's the fate of those who are weak and do not have knowledge (in other fields) although well versed in Islam," Dr Mahathir said.

The Prime Minister said there was no reason why Muslims in this country could not progress because opportunities to acquire knowledge were expanding.

He suggested that funds raised through Baitulmal, a Muslim endowment body, and zakat (tithe) be used to step up knowledge among Muslims.

Dr Mahathir said many Muslims could now afford to donate a lot of money to build mosques and for other such purposes.

He also called on Muslims to create opportunities for non-Muslims to mix with them so that the latter could have a better understanding of Islam and the culture of Muslims.

This, he said, would help to correct the impression given in the international media that all Muslims were terrorists or extremists.

-- BERNAMA

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