

10/05/1998

PM: Muslims shouldn't seek revenge

Syed Nadzri in Cairo

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Muslims should not seek revenge on their enemies or fight among themselves if they want to paint a correct picture of the religion.

He also said Islam was not just about rituals and appearances but a way of life.

Dr Mahathir gave this reminder yesterday when he was conferred an Honorary Doctorate of Literature by Al Azhar University, the world's oldest and most prestigious Islamic university.

The award was another feather in the cap for the Prime Minister in recognition of his contributions to the development of Islam. He was conferred the King Feisal award in Saudi Arabia early last year.

In a speech titled Toleration and Moderation in Islam, Dr Mahathir said Muslims could do a lot to correct the distortions painted by detractors about the religion.

"If we want to banish the perception that Muslims are implacable enemies, intolerant, immoderate and extreme, then we must demonstrate a willingness to forego the desire for revenge, for unmitigated violence.

"Killing each other and killing others in order to emphasise the depth and strength of our commitment to our struggle may succeed in drawing attention to our grievances, but they will not lead to the success of our struggle," he added.

He noted that injustice and oppression would only breed greater determination on the injured party and "the greater will be their resistance".

"We will not win that way unless, of course, it is not winning or success that we are after but the desire to seek revenge for the sake of revenge, to satisfy our animal desires."

Dr Mahathir said the distortions painted of Islam were not due to Islam itself but to the interpretations given to it by Muslims and non-Muslims with vested interests.

He also made several references to the practices of Prophet Muhammad as well as verses in the Quran to underline the significance of moderation and tolerance.

"One of the most significant teachings brought by the Prophet to the Arab tribes was the futility and wrongness of eternal feuds. We know that before Islam, these tribes fought against each other continuously over some slight quarrel that they had in the past.

"They had even forgotten the reasons for their quarrels, but for generations they would remain enemies and would attack each other whenever they met," he added.

Such actions, he said, could only result in wasteful fighting, disunity and weakness.

The Prime Minister acknowledged that a vast majority of Muslims were tolerant and moderate, but pointed out that there were also the black sheep which existed in any religion or grouping.

Islam, he said, had its fair share of aberrations and extremism even though these were against its teachings.

"And, as usual we, the Muslims, are all tarred with the same brush by our detractors," he said.

"And so, among non-Muslims, in particular the ethnic Europeans, there is almost a total belief that Muslims and terrorists are one and the same

thing."

Dr Mahathir said tolerance and moderation had paid off handsomely for Muslims in Malaysia.

It had brought about stability and peace and enabled the country to progress rapidly.

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