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Work to overcome hardship, PM calls

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad says the nation's current economic problems have taught Muslims to remain calm and to act positively and with vision.

In his speech when launching the Maulidur Rasul celebration to mark Prophet Muhammad's birthday at Pusat Islam in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, he said Muslims should be thankful that Malaysia's problems are not as severe as in other countries which face riots, war and natural disasters.

"At least, the hardship we face now makes us realise Allah's greatness and to pray to Him to restore everything to normal," he said.

Stressing that Islam teaches its followers to accept hardship, the Prime Minister said Muslims should take advantage of the Maulidur Rasul celebration to increase efforts to overcome the current problems.

"Not all ambitions and dreams can be achieved in the wink of an eye. Effort and determination must continue until success is attained.

"Our shared responsibility is to pray and abstain from negative attitudes such as greed, corruption, impatience and others.

"What is important is to use the opportunities we have, to increase creativity to develop the religion, race and country," he said.

"If today we are oppressed, humiliated and conquered, either directly or indirectly, the reason is we have not made Islam a way of life," he said.

Islam is not merely about observing certain rituals, Dr Mahathir said, adding that some Muslims appear to think that they will live happily if they enhance such practices.

"They say the rituals will ensure us a place in the hereafter, though not in the world. The world is for other people. The hereafter is for us. Hence, they regard worldly efforts as secular, not Islamic, and reject all of them," he said.

This is contrary to Islam teachings in the Quran. "Is it sufficient for Muslims to only pray and spend all their time on certain rituals? Can Muslims live well if they don't know how to farm, rear animals, fish and produce food on a large scale to feed the millions of Muslims?"

Happiness in life, Dr Mahathir said, cannot be achieved if Islam is not practised in its entirety and Muslims cannot hope to be successful without hard work and without facing disappointment.

"Where is our place in the hereafter if we only practise part of the Islamic teachings? Are we not at fault if we ignore, even reject the role demanded of us in the world?" he added.

The Maulidur Rasul celebration, he said, should remind Muslims of the Prophet's struggle which in turn should be used as a guide.

Also present at the celebration were Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Othman, who is chairman of the Maulidur Rasul celebration central committee, and other Cabinet ministers.

Dr Mahathir also presented Maulidur Rasul awards to 10 recipients for their contribution to society.

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