

14 OCT 1999

Mahathir-Doctors

MUSLIM DOCTORS SHARE SAME RESPONSIBILITY, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 14 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Muslim doctors and medical specialists serving a multi-racial society like Malaysia's bear the same responsibility to treat both Muslim and non-Muslim members of the community.

"What is important is that they display Islamic virtues in their practice. Only then the non-Muslims will respect Islam," he said inaugurating the Association of Malaysian Muslim Specialist Doctors here today.

Dr Mahathir, himself a medical doctor, said Muslim doctors and specialists should not concentrate only looking after the health of Muslims because the larger number of non-Muslim doctors and specialists that the country has also treat Muslims.

The prime minister emphasised that Muslim doctors should explore and master new fields in medicine saying that modern medicine itself was in fact based on studies by Muslim physicians during the glorious early days of Islam.

However, said Dr Mahathir, what was saddening was that Muslims did not carry this tradition of medical research and instead left it to the non-Muslims to pursue and with greater sophistication at that.

"In the past it was the non-Muslims who learned from the Muslims, now it is the opposite, the Muslims learning from non-Muslims, " he said.

Dr Mahathir said mastery of medical discoveries and innovations resulting from new studies was necessary in looking after the health of Muslims.

He said most of the later discoveries also seemed to run contrary to Islam and it was up to the Muslims themselves to make a decision on this.

"Medical experts and religious scholars will have to cooperate on this to help the experts on religion not well-versed in those medical discoveries," he said.

The prime minister said a doctor's work comes under the "fardhu kifayah" (social obligation) that Islam requires Muslims to perform and as such the Muslim society should appreciate the need for more among them to take up the medical profession.

Dr Mahathir said Muslims were in fact just as capable in mastering medicine but many chose other disciplines which could bring speedier and more lucrative returns compared to the difficult and time-consuming medical training.

"If there's no one in the community to look after health matters, we're not meeting one of the requirements of fardhu kifayah.

"That's why we need more to become doctors and medical specialists so as not to sin by failing to discharge this obligation," Dr Mahathir added.

-- BERNAMA

SBJ RYN