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PM: Muslim doctors are responsible to humankind

Chok Suat Ling

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today reminded Muslim doctors that they owed a responsibility not only to those of the Islamic faith but to "all of humankind".

For instance, when Muslims in Bosnia were being killed and repressed, there were not many Muslim doctors who could help them, so they had to depend on non-Muslims.

"We must, therefore, remember that even if we are Muslims, our responsibilities do not just include helping other Muslims, but everyone," Dr Mahathir said at the launch of the Islamic Specialist Doctors Association Malaysia (ISDAM) at the Putra World Trade Centre.

Also present were his wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, and ISDAM president Dr Sidek Nontak. Dr Siti Hasmah is the patron of ISDAM.

Relating his experiences as a medical practitioner visiting a tuberculosis sanatorium in Kuala Kedah, he said during festival seasons, visiting non-Muslims would give gifts to all the patients.

But when it came to some Muslims, they only gave gifts to other Muslims as they felt that those who were not of the Islamic faith did not deserve to join in the Hari Raya festivities.

"This will give people a bad image of Islam. We should care for everyone ... those not of Islamic faith will respect us this way."

He said ISDAM should look into all these issues, and other controversial developments in the medical sphere like euthanasia, surrogate motherhood and others.

Doctors should give precedence to saving lives.

"Islam tells us that life must be preserved. Some people are, however, too rigid ... the question of touching a person of the opposite sex, for instance.

"Some don't want to touch even if a patient is in critical condition. But if you don't touch, then the patient will die."

He said there was a shortage of Muslim specialist doctors in the country as many preferred easier professions.

While there were ample opportunities for Muslims in the country to study medicine, they preferred to pursue knowledge that could be easily acquired.

"They choose to have lucrative salaries early in their careers and they are reluctant to work hard for 24 hours without sleep, for instance.

"If such an attitude persists, if we choose only to master knowledge that can be easily obtained, then we will forever have to depend on non-Muslims when it comes to healthcare."

The Prime Minister also said he was saddened by the fact that medical practices now were derived predominantly from research conducted by non-Muslim countries.

"Modern medicine actually sprang from research conducted during the Islamic renaissance. But the Muslims did not continue with their work.

"Those who learnt from the Muslims later surpassed us."

"If before, they were learning from us, we now have to learn from them." he said.

Dr Mahathir had earlier launched ISDAM's logo. Dr Siti Hasmah later launched its website (<http://www.rcamall.com/mercant/idam.html>) and ISDAM funds - the Healing Heart Fund and Healing Kidney Fund.

The funds are to help children suffering from the ailments.

The association, which is open to all Muslim medical and dental practitioners in the country, hopes to pool the resources of all members in a quest to enhance knowledge.

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