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`Arm yourself with knowledge'

Ashraf Abdullah; M. Sahibullah

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - The Prime Minister today urged Muslim youths to acquire enough skills to help fellow Muslims worldwide as modern forms of oppression could only be fought with a strong religious faith, knowledge in economy and technology.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Muslims could only carry out their religious obligations of defending fellow Muslims against oppressors if they had mastered skills and knowledge in all areas.

He expressed regret that there were some religious scholars who denounced as secular those who pursued knowledge and skills in areas other than religion, thus confusing Muslims.

"Muslims during the days of the Prophet could fight and win wars because they mastered the skills of handling war horses, could make swords, and bows and arrows. But today, can we defend fellow Muslims with war horses, bows and arrows?"

The Prime Minister said the youths must understand the future challenges to Islam which would be greater than what had been faced so far.

He said Muslims should not bask in past glory and hold a lopsided view of the religion without using the capacity to think and improve their knowledge.

He was speaking at the National Muslim Youth Intellectual Discourse organised by the International Islamic University Malaysia's Political Science Students' Forum at the university's main campus in Gombak.

He said besides acquiring deep knowledge of Islam, Muslims should also master worldly skills.

"They have to acquire skills in nuclear science, physics, chemistry, etc to build tanks, fighter jets, missiles and warships," he told the packed auditorium.

Similarly, he said modern technologies enabled the unscrupulous to destroy economies simply by devaluing currencies.

Dr Mahathir said it would be a sin if Muslims did not help fellow Muslims across borders and boundaries.

He said fardhu kifayah (obligations to the community) was as important as fardhu ain (individual religious obligations).

"But if Muslims somewhere are being oppressed or killed and if no one does anything about it, aren't we committing a sin?"

Dr Mahathir said the decision by the Malaysian Government to send its armed forces to Bosnia to stop the slaughter of Muslims by the Serbs, was a religious duty.

"Similarly, our efforts to develop the country, and bring wealth and education to the people are religious obligations."

Dr Mahathir told Muslim youths not to be confused by the different interpretations of Islam advanced by the various scholars, each claiming to be superior over the rest.

"God has endowed us with the faculty of thinking. Not to think is like throwing away a gift which is the most valuable gift to humanity."

Humans being the apex of God's creation should be able to think and decide what is acceptable and what is not.

"When we refuse to think, we reduce ourselves to something less than animals."

Dr Mahathir said due to different interpretations of Islam, Muslims should be willing to discuss openly all matters pertaining to religion.

There are some Muslims who are influenced by those who claim themselves to be Islamic leaders just because they could interpret the Quran.

"Muslims who are influenced by the so-called leaders would do anything what the leaders tell them to do and this could further divide the Muslim ummah."

Dr Mahathir said many Muslims were blinded by so-called leaders who forced them into accepting their interpretations, including going to the extreme of killing Muslims they claimed were kafir (infidels).

These Muslims, who were obsessed by the so called leaders, would not seek and go against the real enemy of Islam but instead attacked other Muslims whom they considered as infidels, he said.

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