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`Muslims in dire need of guidance'

ati Hayatudin; Sajahan Waheed

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday Muslims were in dire need of guidance as many have lost their way and therefore, want to return to the right path.

He said the ummah were confused by the myriad interpretations on Islam and thus were unable to derive from the great religion the essence that would make them true followers and a great people once again.

Addressing more than 150 delegates from 51 Muslim countries at the launch of the first International Conference on Haj Guidance in Sri Kembangan, near Kuala Lumpur, he said, the Muslim ummah had over the years and centuries become divided into so many sects and nations which quite often were at odds with each other, even at war with each other.

"They seemingly feel no longer as brothers. They seem to have rejected a cardinal principle of Islam that they are really one, the ummah."

Fighting and killing by Muslims of other Muslims was forbidden anywhere and at anytime. But quite clearly Muslims were blatantly ignoring the injunction, he added.

Dr Mahathir said Muslims were fighting and killing Muslims everywhere to the extent that they sometimes condemned their Muslim enemies as being kafir (infidel), non-Muslims or apostates in order to justify their killing of fellow Muslims.

"Sometimes they just did not bother to do even this. They just regard their enemies as enemies in spite of their being fellow Muslims.

"In a way, we can say that many Muslims have reverted to the pre-Islamic days of ignorance, the age of the Jahiliah, when Arab tribes held their tribe as the sole object of their loyalty."

He said that they would side with their tribe even if what their tribe did was wrong.

Today it was their nation or even their political parties that they fanatically uphold and fight for and kill other Muslims, he said, adding in their eyes, their nation and their political parties and groups could do no wrong even when they ignore the clear injunctions of Islam.

The Prime Minister said they even side with non-Muslims in order to ensure their Muslim enemies were defeated, subjugated and oppressed.

"They care not for Muslim brotherhood. Indeed, when they invoke the brotherhood of Islam, it is only to justify their assault against other Muslims. The sufferings of other Muslims mean nothing to them."

He said if fellow Muslims were oppressed and even massacred, they would not help because they were too preoccupied with their own quarrels while fighting among themselves.

"Yet the Al-Quran and the Hadith tells us about how the Prophet Muhammad SAW banished the narrow and fanatical loyalties of the Arab tribes, in particular the Meccan refugees and the people of Madinah through the unifying teachings of Islam and set up the first Muslim state of tribes."

Dr Mahathir said the united Muslims then defeated their Khuraish enemies until eventually the whole Arabian Peninsula and more were united for the first time.

He said the community of the Muslims later grew far bigger than the sum total of Arabs and they went on to achieve glory for Allah for 13 centuries.

"There was no talk then that the world belonged to the infidels, the kafir, and that for the Muslims, Allah has prepared for them heaven in the

hereafter. They, therefore, should not seek to widen their territories nor strive to increase the number of Muslims."

He said that Muslims of the Golden Age of Islam must have been tolerant because they were ready to study the works of the ancient scholars, including the Greek philosophers, in order to add to their knowledge and to apply them.

"But we know that today we Muslims are less tolerant. We regard only the study of religion and its practices, the enhancement of religious rituals not originally prescribed as the only thing that should be incumbent upon us. Anything else carries no merit and should not occupy our time."

The Prime Minister said religion was about rituals, to be observed in order to get merit in the afterlife.

He said Muslims could not determine the exact date when they became less tolerant and reject what the community claims to be un-Islamic and not religious.

Some even go as far as to describe everything that was not directly concerned with the knowledge of Islam and the Islamic rituals as being secular and should be rejected, he added.

"But the decline of the Muslims must coincide with this date of rejection. We say it does not matter because we are destined for heaven while those who are successful in this world would end up in hell.

"But do we know for certain that we are without sin and are destined for heaven?" he asked.

Dr Mahathir said the Quran had enjoined upon the Muslims to ensure the safety of themselves as Muslims by being prepared with all the worldly needs to defend themselves and to frighten their enemies.

"It is quite obvious that we have not heeded this injunction. As a result, the Muslims all over the world are oppressed," he said, adding many had been forced to emigrate to non-Muslim countries.

He said Muslims should not be too complacent about their place in the akhirat (afterlife).

"We say proudly that Islam is no ordinary faith. It is a way of life. It is the way of life that the Muslims must practise limited entirely to preparing for the akhirat through the performance of rituals and esoteric prayers while neglecting the well-being of the ummah completely, while letting Muslims to be oppressed, while quarrelling and fighting each other," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he did not believe that the Islamic way of life was limited to the performance of compulsory rituals and acquisition of religious knowledge which gains merit for oneself only.

According to him, the Islamic way of life was the way that would ensure that Muslims and Islam were highly regarded and respected and that their countries were not oppressed.

It also meant Muslim Governments which were skilled in administration and were able to provide the necessities of life.

Besides, they could govern wisely and with justice; that Muslims were also foremost in the field of worldly knowledge and skills; they were able to exploit the resources Allah had given them; that they were benignly rich and considerate of the poor and the miserable, whether Muslims or non-Muslims; they were the epitome of all that was virtuous and honourable in the human race.

He said there was a view that the religious rituals they perform were mere expressions of the faith and carried no guidance for the life of Muslims while it was enough to perform them and to gain merit.

"There is nothing else to be learnt from the rituals that we perform. But others believe that these rituals have something more to teach us, so we may be better Muslims."

In this respect, Dr Mahathir said the haj cannot be just a ritual which Muslims perform because they were enjoined to perform so that they may gain for the next world.

"The haj must surely be more than that. There must be more lessons from the haj for us Muslims. There must be some significance in what we do and in our expression of total submission to Allah."

Dr Mahathir said the haj engendered a sense of oneness among the Ummah as brothers in Islam.

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