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Peace, stability pave success

EDUCATION, knowledge and skills open windows to financially rewarding careers but they do not necessarily make life complete. What maketh, is the attainment of spirituality. Understanding and practice of religion, silently and privately, are the bedrock of contentment. For what is life, if full of material acquisitions, we carry hatred in our hearts and distrust in our minds.

Islam, like all religions, teaches simple tenets. It asks believers to believe in Allah, the all-knowing. It requires Muslims to practice life the way Nabi Muhammad s.a.w. (peace be upon him) lived by example. The ummah must be at peace. Discord divides race and rends countries. That is not the way to chart a Muslim renaissance. Stability paves the road to success.

This was the gist and grist of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's address to an audience of Muslim intellectuals and professionals in London on Tuesday. The theme was universal but the underlying concerns were domestic.

For Dr Mahathir, who is also the president of Umno, is troubled by the intra-Muslim conflict that is likely to derail the economic success of the country and the unity of the Malays. The young among Muslims are obsessed by hatred of the leaders of the land who had toiled tirelessly to establish the very environment that nurtured educated professionals.

They throw in their lot with religious fanatics and extremists. They have feverish thoughts about martyrs' deaths and places in heaven. They have scant regard and no concern for peace and stability among the ummah.

Dr Mahathir's lament is understandable. For he had put in place programmes to nudge the country's economy and to better the livelihood of all in the land in the early years after he assumed the office of party president and Prime Minister, on July 16, 1981.

He gave his initiatives a lofty philosophical framework 10 years later, in 1991, when he made public the pamphlet: Vision 2020 - The Way Forward.

He achieved a measure of success in prodding people to lift themselves from personal strifes and concerns and be exalted by the vision he had for the country.

Economically, despite hiccups, we are well on the road to becoming a developed nation by the year 2020. Socially we are better today than 20 years ago. But the Malays, the Muslims, are divided as was patent in last November's general election.

That is uppermost in Dr Mahathir's mind. Which is why he is devoting more of his time to party work, delegating more governmental duties to his deputy, Datuk Seri Abdullah Badawi. And that is the reason for his cynicism, his admission at the London gathering that it is very difficult to be optimistic about a Muslim renaissance.

His speech reveals his conviction that Muslims do not understand reality. It is actually a converse of the age-old aphorism that mankind cannot bear too much reality.

Dr Mahathir believes that Muslims, as a people and as nations, cannot move forward if they do not realise that Islam is a very, very simple religion. They should not be confused, confounded and entrapped by differing interpretations.

If they continue to argue, debate and disagree on the teachings of their religion they would only lend helping hands to their detractors and

enemies. Muslim countries have to strive to catch up with industrialised economies.

Peace and stability are the assured roads. It is true of Muslim nations and it is also true of the Muslims in Malaysia.

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