

13/11/2000

Real meaning of jihad (HL)

Farush Khan in Doha

SPELLING out the real meaning of jihad (holy war), Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has warned Muslim countries that they will lose in the process of globalisation if they insist on remaining spectators and reject the brotherhood of Islam.

The Prime Minister said that while others were uniting and consolidating their strength, "we are drifting apart and fragmenting".

Reminding the Muslims and the Muslim countries of "a tremendous and frightening challenge" they were facing, he said globalisation in the form that it took now was a threat "against us and our religion".

He said they should not vent their anger and frustration by mounting futile, isolated violence, but should instead plan and execute the development of the ummah so as to be empowered by Information Technology and be capable of handling the challenges of the Information Age.

"This is our real jihad (holy war). I believe we have the talents and the capacity to ensure the success of this jihad," he said when speaking on Islam and Globalisation to about 200 Muslim intellectuals and businessmen from various companies and organisations in Qatar at the Diplomatic Club here last night (Saturday night).

The Prime Minister said that the Muslims could quote the Quran and hadis (sayings of the Prophet) and argue about their meaning, but whatever might be the arguments, they had to act to blunt the challenge of the globalised world.

"We may even master it and bring back the Golden Age of Islam, Insha Allah," he said, drawing applause from the audience.

Dr Mahathir also warned developing countries that they would pay a high cost if they swallowed European ideas without question.

He said all Muslim countries were developing countries and would become a part of the empire of the North Atlantic countries if globalisation as currently conceived went through.

When Europeans came up with an idea, he said, it was intended to result in their domination over the world.

"Well, globalisation is their idea and we can see how it is going to lead to their rebuilding of the World Empire."

Dr Mahathir said Muslim nations were weak and none had any influence over world affairs and for a century now had suffered in silence while they were oppressed.

"We are one billion strong. Every sixth person in this world is a Muslim.

The real problem that we face in a globalised world is that we reject the brotherhood of Islam.

While others are uniting and consolidating their strength we are drifting apart and fragmenting."

He also spoke at length on the emergence of the Information Age, again expressing fear that "it looks like we are going to miss this revolution too" like the way they missed the Industrial Revolution.

"We are too busy with our squabbles over our religion, our politics."

It is sad because Muslims have the capacity to participate in the development of IT and its innumerable applications.

Large numbers of highly skilled Muslims are now living in the countries of the Atlantic North.

"They are there because we have no place for them. So they are

contributing to the body of knowledge and Information Age skills being built up in these countries which may probably be used against us."

These people can be brought back, their skills tapped to build the IT capacities of the Muslim nations and with their skills, knowledge, they may be able to counter some of the harmful effects of globalisation on Muslim nations.

In a few decades, the world's demography will change and there will be no country whose people are ethnically pure.

"If we are smart enough, we can use this to our advantage."

Globalisation may result in the huge corporations taking over the countries in which they operate.

"But on the other hand the migrants from the poor countries will, if not take over, at least play some role in the governance of the countries of their adoption. They may even be able to reduce the oppression of the Muslims worldwide.

"Will the Muslims lose in a global nation, free of nation states, including the Muslim countries? They will lose, of course, if they insist on remaining spectators."

Dr Mahathir later replied to various questions from the audience, including one on Malaysia's rapid development under his leadership.

Earlier, at the same function, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar launched the Arabic version of Dr Mahathir's book *The New Deal For Asia* which was distributed among the audience as well as at the OIC venue at the Sheraton Doha hotel.