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OIC-Mahathir/IT

SPREAD OF KNOWLEDGE VIA IT MESHED WITH FILTH AND LIES- DR M

KUALA LUMPUR, June 27 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today lauded the spread of knowledge in the information technology but warned that it is also meshed with pornography and lies.

He said, "The spread of knowledge is now unstoppable. But information is not only about knowledge. It is also about muck and filth and unmitigated lies spread by people wishing to undermine the development of human society, including the Muslim ummah."

"Our morals, those of our children, the future generations are being subverted so that the profession of Islam will become meaningless. And we do not know enough about the technology or the methods to counter this," he said in his keynote address at the opening of the 27th session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM) here.

Dr Mahathir said, "You may be surprised to know that 50 percent of the business transactions on the Internet is about pornography."

While Muslims cover up their bodies in pious obedience to their religion they are being tempted to download the filthiest pictures, still and moving, from the Internet, he said.

With the Internet, new ways of doing everything has become possible as direct consumer to supplier communication had resulted in direct sales and delivery, he told some 1,000 delegates from 56 Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) member countries.

He said where before goods were imported in bulk by trading houses and distributed through local retailers, now goods came in small parcels direct to consumers from dot-com companies 12,000 miles away.

"The importers, distributors and retailers are all by-passed and will be largely wiped out. Governments can no longer collect import duties or corporate taxes. What will happen to our businesses, our workers and our Governments is not difficult to imagine," he said.

Thus, he said, Muslims must acquire the necessary knowledge and skills of the information age "because if the Muslims turn their backs in the globalised world of IT, they are going to be even worse off than they were in the Industrialised Age of the past century."

Dr Mahathir is an ardent proponent of the acquisition of high technology for local indigenous development covering the whole gamut of IT and multimedia to propel Malaysia into the ranks of the developed world.

The Prime Minister also said lessons that should be learnt from the history of the Muslim people and the Muslim Empire are many.

"But if we look at the present, it is quite clear that we have learnt nothing from our past. We, the Muslims are far from being brothers. Today we are more divided than ever. Many of our countries are at war with each other," he said.

"And within each country we are also unable to unite, to set up strong progressive Governments. If we practise democracy at all, we use Islam to divide rather than to unite and we weaken ourselves and our Governments," he added.

-- BERNAMA

GM AAM