

19/05/2001

Appeal to learned Muslims

Farush Khan

JOHOR BARU, Fri. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight called on those with religious knowledge to educate the people on the true teachings of Islam to ensure that Muslims would not be weak and oppressed.

The Prime Minister said the people had to be made aware that fardu kifayah (compulsory for the society) is as important as fardu ain (compulsory for the individual) and therefore should not be neglected.

He was sad that many people were confused by the opinion of certain groups who distorted the teachings of Islam to suit their political goal.

Opening the Ummah Development seminar, he said he hoped the seminar would discuss openly the vital aspects of Islamic teachings so that the people were clear about it.

For example, he said, people with religious authority should emphasise also the need for Muslims to be developed through other aspects of learning other than religion.

He said science and technology were equally important if development was to be achieved and the interest and safety of the ummah safeguarded.

Dr Mahathir said the people should realise that diversity of knowledge was important to develop the country and the people.

"Not all should concentrate on becoming ulama because if they do, the country will be weak as there will be nobody to develop the country," Dr Mahathir said.

While there must be some people who concentrate on religious knowledge and provide guidance to others, others should concentrate on other aspects of knowledge because it was important for the development of the ummah.

At present, Muslims have to depend on others who would not give assistance for free.

"Therefore to develop Muslims, we must divide responsibility, with some studying science and technology."

These people, he said, were also doing a religious obligation through their contribution because what they were doing was also to protect the Muslims.

He was upset for example when he went to one country where he learnt the baju kurung worn by Malaysian women were considered haram.

"The women were forced to wear the jubah."

He also cited cases where students were pressed to attend qiamulail (to stay awake at night) and attend kuliah subuh and tazkirah (religious ceramah) or otherwise they would be branded as not being good Muslims.

"What is more saddening is that there are those who teach the students to hate others," the Prime Minister said.

Dr Mahathir said his statement on the need to be grateful to others apart from God, had also been distorted.

There were people who wrongly quoted him as saying that there was no need even to be grateful to the Prophet.

The seminar, held at the Puteri Pan Pacific, is organised by the Johor Government with the co-operation of Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia.

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