

27/04/2001

Muslims urged to unite and shape globalisation course

Hamisah Hamid in Dubai

DUBAI (United Arab Emirates), Thurs: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called on Muslim nations to unite and shape the course of globalisation to allow everybody, regardless of race, religion or geographical location, to benefit from the process.

He said globalisation, which is an idea created and interpreted by the West, is benefitting only the rich while the poor is made even poorer.

"We, the Muslim countries must have a say, a big say, in the shaping of this globalised world.

"We must put up our ideas and proposals based on logic and reasoning and on the maximum good that it can bring to the maximum number of people," he said when delivering a keynote address entitled, "Meeting the Challenges of the 21st Century: Role of Muslim nations", at the Emirates International Forum here.

In meeting the challenges of the 21st century, Dr Mahathir said Muslim nations should strive for good relations with each other, adopting good governance, discard the senseless anger and frustrations as well as contribute to the world's peace.

"After achieving this or even while striving to achieve this, it is most likely that many problems in the relations between Muslims and non-Muslim nations will be resolved," he said.

The Prime Minister advised Muslim nations not to rush to embrace democracy, especially liberal democracy, as it could do them more damage than the existing system practised in their countries.

He foresees that democracy, together with liberalism and the free market, which are conceived by the West, will eventually be abandoned.

"The abuses and distortions of the democratic system will go on until one day it is discarded in favour of a new perfect system.

"Now, capitalism is triumphant as it rides on the back of democracy. But already the distortions are showing up. Eventually democracy, liberalism, the free market will all be discarded," he said.

The only good thing about democracy, he noted, is that theoretically, the system allows for the change of the Government without violence.

Dr Mahathir, who spoke at length about the weaknesses of democracy and Western dominance though idealism and economic strength, said the system causes instability in many countries as the nation's wealth is wasted in political infighting between numerous political parties. At the same time, bribery, corruption and threats are common.

"Today, democracy does not work even in the most experienced democracies of the West.

"What is working now is money, not majority will," said the premier, who last week, had proposed the ban on "rich candidates" from contesting in the Umno election.

Sharing his thoughts with some 500 people, comprising captains of the industry, corporate leaders and business community in UAE, Dr Mahathir said Muslim nations are lagging behind their Western counterparts because they have deviated from the true teachings of Islam and returned to the pre-Islamic ways such as feuding with each other and closing minds to modern knowledge.

The abuse of Islamic teachings has seen Muslims today fight "jihads" against fellow Muslims and not against those from different faith who make Muslims their enemies, he said.

"Yet, we Muslims are no less capable of acquiring knowledge, of innovations and inventions, of spewing new ideas as well as others.

"We are as capable of governing ourselves well and of growing and strengthening our countries as anyone else," he said.

He said the teachings of Islam had converted the ignorant desert Arabs into a brave and talented people who were able to build a huge empire in less than 100 years as well as the world's greatest civilisation.

"If Islam could do these for the Jahiliah, the ignorant ones, there is no reason why it cannot do the same for us now," he said.

Dr Mahathir lamented that due to the misinterpretation or wrong emphasis in the teachings of Islam, the Muslims were unable to meet the challenges of the Industrial Age.

He said the Muslims should have learnt the lessons from their failures to participate in the Industrial Revolution and prepare themselves for the Information Revolution.

However, he said the Muslims do not have the necessary scientific and technical knowledge, industrial skills and management know-how because their religious leaders do not encourage them to acquire those skills.

Even many rich Muslim countries are not categorised as developed nations because they lack industrial and commercial capacities of the developed countries, he noted.

"I am sure given the opportunity, Muslim scholars will once again dominate the world.

"They will not only master all the knowledge, but will develop new knowledge. Best of all, their faith will bring morality into the application of the knowledge they acquired," he said.

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