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`Muslims must master worldly knowledge'

JOHOR BAHRU, Sat. - The survival of Muslims depends on how well they can grasp and master worldly knowledge in addition to that of religion.

Johor information and research head Dr Khairul Azmi Mohamad said in the globalisation era, the only way for Muslims to help themselves would be for them to advance economically, scientifically and technologically.

"Without this, the ummah cannot compete with others who are now making headway especially in the fields of science and technology," he said at the seminar on the Development of the the Ummah.

The two-day event, organised by the Johor Government with the co-operation of the Malaysian Institute of Islamic Understanding, was opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday.

In his paper entitled Concept of Ummah Development in Malaysia, Khairul Azmi said the ummah should instil in themselves positive attitude towards acquiring worldly knowledge.

He said Muslims should master worldly knowledge so that they need not have to depend on others when defending themselves.

"Efforts to develop the Islamic community so that it is capable of inventing and producing quality products need to be viewed positively."

He said Muslims must be aware of this and not sideline knowledge to ensure that they were not left behind.

"If they can acquire and master both at the same time, I believe the ummah will achieve resounding success similar to that achieved by all the scholars before us.

"Let us recall how successful they are. Muslims scholars like Ibn Sina, Al Khawarizmi and Hassan Al-Haitam, are capable of not only mastering knowledge in medicine and science but also have great knowledge in the religion," he added.

He said Muslims should incorporate new knowledge into various aspects of Islamic legacy and master all modern disciplines, understand them and determine which of them could be utilised for the common good.

He said that if the Muslim civilisation were to achieve its destiny and experience a second revival, a balanced approach to all challenges in this world and thereafter was essential.

At the same time, he said, political stability would guarantee that all plans to develop the ummah would be successful.

IKIM director-general Datuk Dr Ismail Ibrahim, meanwhile, said the implementation of Islamic values in the country had fulfilled the "reality need" of the people and it was in line with Islam.

He said a good Government would not sideline the needs of the people and religion but instead strategise an agenda to further enhance the quality of life.

The Government, he said, was instilling moral values to counter the effects of modernisation and its pre-occupation with material gain.

Citing example, he said, much of business development and many of the new entrepreneur organisations were the fruit of the New Economic Policy which had created a sizeable Muslims middle class.

In this context, he said, Malaysia had been successful in leading the Muslim community.

"This is reality. The current leadership and the Government have successfully led the Malays who are once poor to where they are today through their various policies like the New Economic Policy.

"If they fail to deliver their responsibility, I believe that it will be difficult for the people to run away from the vicious cycle of poverty.

"Statistics show that in 1970, the poverty rate stood at 52.4 per cent, in 1995 it went down to 16.2 per cent and in 1999 it dropped to 8.9 per cent," he said.

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