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Mahathir-knowledge

DR MAHATHIR WANTS MUSLIMS TO ABANDON DEFEATIST ATTITUDE

By: Mohd Arshi Daud

MANAMA, April 21 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Sunday Muslims must discard the defeatist attitude in the current information age, where "knowledge is power more than before."

The Muslims' inclination to think that it was impossible to catch up and surpass others ahead of them was an unworthy attitude, he told a training and human resources conference, here.

In his keynote address at the 31st IFTDO World Conference here, Dr Mahathir said that as the khalifahs on earth, Muslims had the capacity and talents.

"We can do what the others can do if we realign and apply our intellect. We need not be irreligious, atheistic or hedonistic.

"We can keep our faith. But we must balance between the exigencies of this world and the akhirat (hereafter)," he said.

The IFTDO (International Federation of Training and Development Organisation) is a worldwide network of human resources professionals committed to developing and transferring knowledge, skills and technology to enhance personal and organisational growth, productivity and human resource development.

The prime minister is on a two-day visit to this Gulf island state of Bahrain, the last leg of his week-long three-nation trip which includes the north African countries of Morocco and Libya.

He is leading a 180-member entourage to strengthen bilateral and commercial ties with these countries.

Dr Mahathir said history had shown that nations with the greatest amount of knowledge dominated the world.

When the early Muslims obeyed Allah's injunction to study and observe their surroundings, the early Muslim scholars acquired knowledge from the old non-Muslim civilisation and created new learnings such as Algebra, Astronomy and Algorithm, he said.

These knowledge made the Islamic world the centre of learning and a great civilisation which gave Islam and the Muslims an honourable place in the world, he added.

But when the injunction to seek knowledge was interpreted as seeking religious knowledge only, the Muslim intellectuals avoided non-religious knowledge for fear of being labelled kafir or infidels, he said.

"No new knowledge was pioneered and non-religious knowledge became so alien to the Muslims that the great Muslim scholars were actually lost to the non-Muslim world, lost principally to the Europeans.

"Thus Ibnu Sinna became Avicenna; Ibni Rusdi became Averroes etc. Al Khwarizmi who invented the Algorithm base was ignored by the latter-day Muslims and yet without the mathematics based on Algorithm, modern computers and the programming of the microchip would not be possible," Dr Mahathir said.

As time passed, the Muslims became more and more ignorant, did not participate in the development of scientific and technological knowledge, missed the industrial revolution and also attempted to reject products of the industrial revolution.

Today, the Muslims were broader-minded and prepared to use practically all the products of the non-Muslims but generally they were only the users, not the producers and certainly not the inventors because they lacked knowledge.

Dr Mahathir said that given their lack of knowledge, the Muslims could not invent, design or produce equipment to defend themselves as enjoined by the teaching of Islam.

"Ever since the demise of the Ottoman Empire, we have not been able to defend ourselves. Look at what is happening to Palestine. We are constantly begging the world to stop the carnage.

"We know we are weak and unable to defend the ummah, defend Islam even. There is not a single Muslim nation among the developed nations.

"We are all developing nations dependent on the charity of non-Muslims. Is this what Islam wants us to be?" he said.

While the Muslims could blame the aggressors of other Muslims, Dr Mahathir said, they could not claim that they were free from blame.

"I would go further and say that we have sinned. We may carry out all the other ibadah but we would still have to pay for our sins, in this world and the next," he added.

The prime minister said Muslims today had a grave need to master new knowledge about science and technology, even to pioneer this knowledge, to be at the cutting edge.

Noting that acquisition of new knowledge is not easy and is time-consuming, he said that as enjoined by Allah, Muslims must be patient as even "the prophet did not convert all to Islam on the first day."

He also said that since the division of labour was necessary in a community, Muslims must master every field of modern knowledge apart from religion.

Dr Mahathir warned that if Muslims ignored the need to seek, acquire, improve and master knowledge they would be at their own risk and at their own peril.

"What happens to the Palestinians today may well happen to all of us," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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