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Mahathir-Knowledge

KNOWLEDGE IN OTHER FIELDS VITAL TO DEFENCE OF THE MUSLIMS

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 29 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Muslims must acquire and master knowledge in other fields besides Islam to defend their interests and ensure their wellbeing.

The prime minister said they must pool their knowledge in fields like science and technology, military and administration and not only concentrate on learning religion to the highest level.

"If all Muslims try to acquire religious knowledge to the highest level and become ulama, it's unlikely that they will acquire other knowledge," he said in response to a question from a participant at the Conference on Issues and Process of Mind-Opening of the Malay Muslims organised by the Dewan Bahasa and Pustaka (DBP) here.

He said Muslims always gauged the degree of Muslimness of a person by his religious knowledge when what was important was his belief in the tenets of Islam.

"What's clear is that those who only learn about religion don't have the ability to administer the country, manage the country's affairs, the military and so forth to defend the Muslims.

"So, we must work together and not accuse people who don't take up Islam as rejecting Islam," he said.

The prime minister said that in reality, religious knowledge and ardour alone were not enough to defend the Muslims and they must have knowledge in other fields, which were no less important, for their wellbeing.

"Our problem today is that to go to war we have to buy arms from the enemy. Would the enemy want to sell the best weapons to us? It's unlikely and if we just ask for victory without putting in the effort, we would not get it," he said, citing the example of the Taliban forces in Afghanistan fighting the American attacks without modern war equipment or even uniforms.

To another question on whether the country's education system should be changed to open up the minds of the Malays, especially the young generation, Dr Mahathir said the system could be changed but it would not bring benefit unless command of all forms of knowledge was regarded as something required by religion and a serious responsibility of Muslims.

There must be a change in mindset for one to accept that the command of any knowledge was compulsory for Muslims in the interest of the religion and Muslims themselves, he said.

Asked about returning to the basic teachings of Islam, Dr Mahathir said that when one returned to the basics of Islam it would enable the Muslims to achieve success and become good followers.

He said that in the early days of Islam, not many interpretations were made of Islamic teachings except on the basic things but now there were various interpretations including the projection of a Muslim as one who must sport a beard and wear a turban.

Dr Mahathir said that as long as there were confusing interpretations of Islam there would always be extremist and fanatic Malay Muslims.

On a proposal that a team be set up to formulate the findings of the conference for the purpose of opening the minds of the Malay Muslims, he said the Malay Muslims should not be polemic and make formulations without taking pains to implement them.

The mind should be focused on how to implement a particular proposal, he said

To another question, Dr Mahathir said the Malay Muslims need not go back to the early days of Islam but should instead move on because with hindsight they could correct the mistakes made in the past.

"The Malay Muslims don't have the diligence to do a thing over and over again. If we do a thing repeatedly, we will become efficient," he said. He said that actually Islam was perfect but its followers were not.

-- BERNAMA

HS AHH RON JK