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Mahathir-Muslims

DON'T BLAME ISLAM FOR WOES OF THE UMMAH, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

By: Mohd Fisol Jaafar and Muin Abdul Majid

KUALA LUMPUR, May 7 (Bernama) -- The Prime Minister today said Muslims themselves are at fault for the sad state of affairs they are in now and should not point fingers at others or blame Islam itself for their fate.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Islam was never wrong but the followers themselves often were wrong in their interpretation and practice of Islam.

"Remember that the sad plight of the Muslims of today is our own doing, due to our not really practising Islam," he said when delivering a strongly-worded keynote address at the Seventh Conference of the Ministers of Endowment and Islamic Affairs here.

He said the fate of the Muslims today was of their own making and something that was not ordained.

"It is basically because they ignore the true teachings of Islam, the injunctions of the Al-Quran and the guidance of true Hadis. They quote the Quran often enough but only to explain away their wrong deeds.

"They can even explain why they, as Muslims, deny that all Muslims are their brothers as taught by Islam. And having declared certain Muslims as apostates, they then kill these Muslims in the name of Islam," he said.

Dr Mahathir said as a result, Muslims and Islamic countries were weak and incapable of protecting themselves and their countries which saw Muslims living in poverty and misery.

"The result is Jenin," he said, in an apparent reference to the Israeli military onslaught on the Palestinian refugee settlement which reportedly left dozens killed and many injured.

Underscoring his disappointment on the sad plight of the Muslims, the Prime Minister invited his audience to reflect on why a glorious Muslim empire centred in Granada spanning over 13 centuries collapsed in the hands of the Spaniards in 1492.

"Many Muslims accept the demise of the Muslim empire as 'takdir', as Allah's will. Muslims never really studied the role that they themselves played which brought about their downfall. They never blamed themselves," he said.

Dr Mahathir noted that Muslims had done little to save the empire and civilisation and also to save themselves from oppression and their religion from being dishonoured.

He went on to draw the attention of conference participants to the poor economic standing of the ummah, resulting in their inability to help fellow Muslims in need.

There was a misconception that being rich was sinful when in actual fact the Islamic teaching held that being poor was close to being "kufur" or unIslamic, he said.

Dr Mahathir said if the Muslims were uniformly poor, then charity would not be possible and the poor could not benefit from the generosity that was enjoined by Islam upon Muslims.

Therefore, he said it was important for Muslims to work hard and increase their wealth to enable them to pay zakat, practise alms-giving and build infrastructures for the benefit of fellow Muslims.

Dr Mahathir said showered with all kinds of resources, it would be sinful for a Muslim society not to strive to develop itself.

The Prime Minister said it was clear that the teachings of Islam, if followed by the ummah, would result in an equitable and just society and a

rich and powerful one.

"Equipping ourselves with knowledge and skills and using them to enrich ourselves and our countries is therefore the sine qua non of fulfilling the injunction of Islam to be charitable and to endow our wealth for the performance and propagation of our faith.

"The wealthier we are, the more we can endow and the stronger will be the ummah," he added.

Dr Mahathir also regretted that many had poked fun at the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) for its ineffectiveness.

"I am ashamed that many among Muslims and non-Muslims have made fun of the OIC saying that it stands for 'Oh! I see'. The implication is that we just see and we do nothing," he said.

He acknowledged that the OIC had not been remarkable since its inception with members seldom agreeing on issues and its agencies had failed to deliver.

-- BERNAMA

MAM MFJ AO