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Endowment-Reaction

MAHATHIR'S VIEWS ON MUSLIMS TIMELY, SAY DELEGATES

By: Muna Khalid and Rozilan Salleh

KUALA LUMPUR, May 7 (Bernama) -- Several delegates at the Conference of Endowment and Islamic Affairs Ministers have hailed Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's statement today that Muslims have themselves to blame for the sad state of affairs they are in.

They said the Prime Minister's views on the subject, contained in his keynote address to the conference, were timely amid widespread misconceptions among superpowers about Muslims and Islamic countries.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Abdul Hamid Zainal Abidin said Dr Mahathir's candid views on the problems faced by Muslims worldwide was well received by several other countries.

"The Prime Minister was sincere and direct to the point...with the objective of improving the lot of the Muslims and Islamic countries," he said when asked to comment on the keynote address.

In the address, Dr Mahathir said Muslims should not point fingers at others or blame Islam itself for their fate. Islam was never wrong but the followers themselves often were wrong in their interpretation and practice of Islam, he said.

"Remember that the sad plight of the Muslims of today is our own doing, due to our not really practising Islam," the Prime Minister said.

Abdul Hamid hoped Muslim leaders would receive Dr Mahathir's criticism of Muslims with an open mind.

"We hope there is a change in attitude among leaders of Islamic countries following the Prime Minister's speech," he added.

Mohamed Alhadi Abusetta, secretary of the Libyan Peoples' Committee for General Organisation for Endowment and Zakat Affairs, described Dr Mahathir's speech as very clear and frank.

"He puts the point on the spot. It is time that we say the right thing. We don't just say things that are good only, we have to say exactly what is our weaknesses," he said.

He said Islamic countries should start seeing everything in the right perspective.

Indonesian Religious Affairs Minister Prof. Said Agil Husin Al-Munawar said he fully agreed that Islam should not be blamed for the shortcomings of its followers.

"All of the Islamic principles are indeed good (but) they have got to be implemented. Islam cannot be blamed, it is we who are at fault," he said.

Djibouti Islamic Affairs Adviser Ali Mohamad said his country opposed the tendency among superpowers to link Islam to terrorism.

He said Djibouti had established a special committee to discuss the terrorism problem.

-- BERNAMA

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