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Hamid-Endowment

MINISTERS DISCUSS DAKWAH ISSUE, EFFORTS AT RESTORING MUSLIMS' IMAGE

By: Muin Abdul Majid

KUALA LUMPUR, April 30 (Bernama) -- Efforts at uplifting the Muslims' image which had been adversely affected lately will be among the important issues to be discussed at the Seventh Conference of the Ministers of Endowment and Islamic Affairs here beginning Monday.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Abdul Hamid Zainal Abidin said the actions of a small group of Muslims had given rise to a negative perception of the religion and Muslims in the eyes of the international community.

"This is due to the mistakes made by this small group of Muslims who acted in a manner that does not reflect the true teachings of Islam and for which Muslims are being punished," he told Bernama.

Abdul Hamid said he would represent Malaysia in presenting a working paper on the country's experiences in Islamic dakwah and how it tackled the extremist groups.

Eight working papers would be tabled at the conference, including one on the establishment of a world foundation for Islamic heritage which will be proposed by Egypt, as well as a general strategy to promote Islam using various languages proposed by Morocco.

Abdul Hamid said weaknesses which had cropped up in the Islamic community, including the attitudes of the extremists to the extent that they no longer reflected Islamic teachings, must be tackled together.

"As a Muslim nation, Malaysia too had vast experience in the matter and should share them with other countries," he said.

The Muslims' image had been greatly tarnished by the suicide attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York and the Pentagon in Washington on Sept 11 which were linked to the Al-Qaeda movement led by Saudi Arabian millionaire Osama bin Laden.

Since then, the Muslim community was reported to have faced pressures including attacks on mosques and their community centres in several locations in the world and more stringent immigration checks were imposed on them at some airports.

Several Muslim nations were also reported to face the possibility of military attacks by the United States such as those endured by Afghanistan for allegedly being involved in terrorist activities.

Abdul Hamid said it was hoped that the three-day conference would be able to enhance cooperation among Muslim nations to achieve more comprehensive coordination in matters concerning Islamic affairs including Islamic dakwah.

He said that the dakwah approach and strategy must be reviewed to suit developments in the modern age.

"This forum will look into the matter more seriously, that is, how to find a more effective formula in our efforts to spread Islamic dakwah to the community," he said.

Abdul Hamid said the conference, which would be opened by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, would also discuss economic issues and a representative of the Islamic Development Bank, based in Jeddah, is expected to present a working paper on the investment.

The minister said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad would deliver a keynote address on the second day of the conference.

He said the presence of the two national leaders demonstrated the government's sensitivity in efforts at preserving the greatness of Islam.

Abdul Hamid said the choice of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) in selecting Malaysia to host the meeting this time was an honour for the country.

He said it reflected the Islamic world's confidence in Malaysia's capability to run an international conference in line with the country's achievement as a modern Islamic nation.

"That is why many of the participants are interested to have a closer look at our country which is so popular internationally, especially among the Muslim nations," he added.

Meanwhile in PUTRAJAYA, six agencies and private companies had chipped in to ensure the success of the conference.

"The companies have shown strong commitment and patriotic spirit in government efforts and activities especially in contributing to the conference," Abdul Hamid said after the presentation of the contributions.

The companies which contributed to the conference were Edaran Otomobil Nasional (EON), Perusahaan Otomobil Nasional (Proton) and Perusahaan Otomobil Kedua (Perodua) which provided vehicles.

Syarikat Telekom Malaysia provided telephone facilities while TM Touch provided cellular telephones and pre-paid cards. Petronas provided petrol for the vehicles.

Meanwhile, the armed forces and police provided drivers for the vehicles as well as security arrangements.

The conference, which is expected to be attended by 250 delegates from 56 OIC member countries, will be held from May 6 to 8.

-- BERNAMA

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