

10 JUL 2003

Scholars-Secret (With pix)

M'SIA'S DEVELOPMENT SUCCESS CAN BE EMULATED, SAYS EX-INDON MINISTER

PUTRAJAYA, July 10 (Bernama) -- Malaysia's advancement into a model progressive Islamic country has prompted a former Indonesian minister attending the World Conference of Islamic Scholars to seek the secret recipe for the country's achievement.

Former Indonesian Religious Affairs Minister Tarmizi Taher posed this question to Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad during a dialogue session with conference participants that followed immediately after the opening ceremony by the Prime Minister.

Dr Mahathir, in his reply, said that the success of the government in developing the country was primarily attributed to its policy of emphasising on an all-rounded education for Malaysians.

"Education to our mind is extremely important and it must be one that is well-rounded, not just in the so-called worldly knowledge but also spritual knowledge," he said.

Dr Mahathir said apart from having a good spiritual grounding, the government also stressed that it was also important for Malaysians to have knowledge in other fields which were necessary for the country's development.

"..that is Malaysia's policy. And Alhamdulillah, we have made some progress towards becoming a developed country," he said.

Apart from emphasising on education, Dr Mahathir said the government felt there was a need for Malaysians to understand Malaysia's political system, if it was for the country's benefit.

"...otherwise we may be practising a system which can actually destroy us," he said.

The Prime Minister highlighted the fact that the government's emphasis on education was reflected by the substantial allocation to the sector.

He said the government spent more than 20 per cent of its budget on education whereas most countries had spent more on their armed forces.

"We think that it is only through education that we can develop and catch up with other countries," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said that at the same time Malaysians need to set their sights on acquiring knowledge.

He said it was because of this objective that Malaysia had set the target of becoming a developed nation by the year 2020.

-- Bernama

RT NM AZZ AO