

10 JUL 2003

Mahathir-Dialogue

DON'T FORSAKE RELIGION IN ACQUIRING KNOWLEDGE, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

By Nor Hayati Muda and Rosyatimah Tukimin

PUTRJAYA, July 10 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Muslims should not become arrogant and forget their religion in their quest to acquire knowledge.

Instead knowledge should strengthen their beliefs in the religion and Allah, he said during a dialogue with participants immediately after opening the World Conference of Islamic Scholars, here today.

"When we study these subjects (like science), we must not forget our religion. We must not become so arrogant and say that we know everything, we can solve everything," said the Prime Minister.

Dr Mahathir said there were instances where those who had acquired knowledge from the Europeans and the West had the notion that they did not need religion anymore because they felt they knew everything.

"They think they can do anything. There is no need for religion and there is no need for God because they have the knowledge. If they want to fly to the moon, they just fly to the moon. They don't have to say the prayers like we do here, they just get into the spaceship and fly to the moon," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that was shallow thinking because science, for instance, could only answer the question as to how things happened and not why it happened.

Citing a simple formula of how the combination of two hydrogen and one oxygen atoms could become water (H<sub>2</sub>O), Dr Mahathir said scientists could not, however, answer why it was so and not the combinations of other elements.

"Of course, when they come to this stage they simply said it's nature. And when we asked them what is nature there is no answer. So there is the Creator, there is God, there is Allah who creates all these things, and in the end all your explanation as to why things happened, you come to the stage where you have to say I don't know, it is nature and in fact it is Allah, it is God, the God that we worship, who creates everything," he said.

Dr Mahathir said things also happened according to Allah's will, and humans should accept there was a greater power that human could not understand and explain everything on earth.

Therefore, he said, knowing about science should strengthen a person's belief in religion and Allah.

"It is only by admitting by humility that there is a greater power than us that we become real human beings with feelings that are considered as humane towards others.

"The problem with the world today is that it is a Godless world, people have forsaken religion," he said.

Dr Mahathir said, however, some had gone back to religion and had become fanatical and misinterpreted their religion.

"It is not only Islam that is being misinterpreted, Christianity is also being misinterpreted by Christian fundamentalists and so do the Jews, they also misinterpreted their religion. Because of all these misinterpretations, we have conflicts that we see today," he said.

Muslims, Dr Mahathir said, could introduce a new approach to knowledge by making a stand and attitude that was different to that of the West.

"We should think of knowledge as a gift of God to us and we should acquire it because that is the way for us to have a better life in this

world and in the next, and also to be able to defend the Ummah and prevent Islam from being humiliated and looked down upon by others," said the Prime Minister.

To another question, Dr Mahathir said there should be a balance between "fardu ain" and "fardu kifayah" as without it Muslims may not have the capacity to defend themselves.

"For a long time we have been stressing on fardu ain, which is a duty performed for ourselves but not for the community. For Islam, fardu kifayah is also important as a community that has no capacity to defend itself is committing sin," he said.

Dr Mahathir said when Muslims had misconceptions where emphasis was placed only on religious knowledge then they would not fulfil their obligations to the community.

He said to defend the Muslim community, production of arms and logistics might be necessary and for this, Muslims had to learn science.

"It is also important in learning our religion that we get the correct interpretation of our religion.

"There are extreme interpretations....which to our mind is wrong. Once we get the correct interpretation of Islam, we get a sound base. Today, we need to have knowledge because this is going to play a big role in our own development," he said.

He also said that Muslims must set their sights on the objective of acquiring knowledge.

Citing an example for such a misinterpretation, Dr Mahathir said there were Malaysians who went abroad to study and ended up trying to become more religious than the locals there themselves.

"If ulamas were to stress the importance of acquiring the "fardu kifayah" knowledge then there will be no difficulty for us to stress on this," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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