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Tajdid-Mahathir

DR MAHATHIR'S ISLAM-BASED REFORMS ON PAR WITH WEST ASIAN ULAMA

ALOR STAR, Sept 27 (Bernama) -- A lack of specialisation in Islamic studies has not stopped Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad from being as effective as other ulama in practising a knowledge culture based on "tajdid" (reform), a lecturer said today.

Associate Prof Dr Rahimin Affandi Abdul Rahman from the Islamic Studies Academy of Universiti Malaya said Dr Mahathir's thinking was on par with Islamic scholars from West Asia as he was very knowledgeable in various fields, including religion.

"However, Dr Mahathir is humble by referring specialised religious matters to the ulama and not challenging their authority on Islamic values," he said in a working paper at a seminar titled "Dr Mahathir: The 21st Century Thinker" here.

Dr Rahimin Affandi categorised Dr Mahathir among local scholars like Za'ba, Abdul Rahim Kajai and Prof Ahmad Ibrahim who, despite lacking qualifications in Islamic studies, had maintained the true characteristics of Islam.

"Dr Mahathir has several characteristics of the true Muslim intellectual," he said in his paper entitled "The Tajdid Concept and Dr Mahathir's Islamic Thinking: An Analysis".

Dr Rahimin Affandi said the Prime Minister's ideas on reform were based on his deep understanding of Al-Quran and Islamic traditions and had not been taken from other religions.

Dr Mahathir, he said, had been painted negatively, as "Mahazalim", by his detractors and in a positive light as a thinker and the saviour of the Malays and Muslims.

"In whatever situation, the latter opinion has been given more support and has received official recognition from modern Islamic scholars," he said.

Meanwhile, Prof Zakaria Stapa from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia said Dr Mahathir's knowledge and education made him the foundation of the ummah's strength.

He said Dr Mahathir often opined that Muslims needed to be involved in various branches of knowledge instead of concentrating solely on religion.

-- BERNAMA

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