

15 OCT 2003

Mahathir-Plan

DR MAHATHIR EMPHASISES NEED TO PLAN FOR MUSLIM VICTORY

PUTRAJAYA, Oct 15 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today summoned the Muslim world to take stock of their strengths and weaknesses towards developing a plan that can restore the ummah and Islam to their former glory.

The prime minister said that the Muslims were now bent on quarrelling and killing each other so much so that they had lost the respect of other communities.

"We are reacting, we are fighting back without thinking whether we will achieve victory or not. There is no plan, nobody strategises anything.

"So we have to pause, think and develop a plan, a strategy as to how we can help the Muslims recover their proper place in the universe," he said during the dialogue session after presenting his keynote address at the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Business Forum, here.

The two-day event is being held in conjunction with the 10th Summit of OIC leaders which opens at the Putrajaya Convention Centre tomorrow.

Dr Mahathir enthralled his audience with thoughtful and sometimes witty replies delivered in his customary straightforward manner.

The prime minister, who is retiring at the end of the month after 22 years in office, said that since Muslims neglected to pursue studies in fields other than religion, they became weak and were subsequently oppressed.

He said that developing a strategy for the betterment of the Muslim community was not something impossible.

"We can do it, we have certain assets and I believe that if we take stock of what we have, develop a plan and implement the plan, Inshaallah we can overcome our difficulties and restore the ummah to its proper place," he said.

Asked what was the most important factor that made Malaysia what it is today, Dr Mahathir said that it was the ability of its multiracial society to live, work and play together.

He said that racial harmony enabled the country to enjoy stability, hence creating a conducive environment for business and development.

On another matter, Dr Mahathir said that the world respected Islam before this because early Muslims were not confused by too many interpretations, which is the case today.

During the time of Prophet Muhammad, there were no Sunnis, Shias or followers of various imams.

But today, he said, the Sunnis and the Shias would fight and kill each other.

"Is this Islamic? If it is not, if we agree that it is the many interpretations of Islam which have caused the split in Islam, resulting in Muslims not being able to get along, then we must go back to the original Islam as taught by the prophet," he said.

Queried on how he proposed to promote his ideas after retirement, Dr Mahathir said that he would be willing to speak in any part of the Muslim and non-Muslim world alike if required.

"In forums such as this one, it is possible for me to give my views. It is not necessary that everybody must accept my view. I can give my view and you can give yours.

"We can discuss and we can accept whatever views that can be implemented," he added.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir delivered his keynote address entitled "Towards A Renewed OIC: An Agenda For Peace and Prosperity."

-- BERNAMA

MAM KTC JK