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Scholars-Al-Azhar

MALAYSIA IS A MODEL ISLAMIC STATE, SAYS DR TANTAWI

By Luqman Haziq and Mohd Razee Hassan

PUTRAJAYA, July 10 (Bernama) -- Sheikh Al-Azhar Dr Mohammad Sayed Tantawi said Malaysia is a model for other Islamic countries because it practises the true teachings of Islam.

"Certainly, Malaysia is a model Islamic state. Just look at its rapid development and also its people hold on to the true teachings of Islam in an atmosphere of peace and harmony, without any riot and unrest.

"These are the characteristics of an Islamic state because Islam brings progress to its ummah, not backwardness," he said at a media conference after calling on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at his office, here today.

He was accompanied during the 50-minute meeting with the Dr Mahathir by the Religious Advisor to the Prime Minister, Tan Sri Abdul Hamid Othman.

Dr Tantawi said other Islamic countries should emulate Malaysia in their efforts to bring progress to their respective communities.

He said Islam was also against invaders and those who liked to wage war on others.

"Islam calls on its followers to know of their rights, whether concerning the religion or worldly matters.

"At the same time, they cannot invade others. Allah does not like those who wage war or violated other people's rights," he said.

Dr Tantawi arrived in Malaysia today to attend the three-day Conference of Islamic Scholars opened by Dr Mahathir today.

He would present a working paper entitled "True Religion in Facing Challenges of Globalisation" tomorrow.

He also said that Islam called on its followers to help each other as well as the non-Muslims instead of committing sin and making enemies.

"I concur with the views of the Prime Minister that Muslims must cooperate with each other. Just like a building, every part of its structure is interdependent.

"Islamic scholars must also give correct information to the Muslims and the people generally on all matters pertaining to the ummah," he said.

Asked on the conference, Dr Tantawi said it benefited the Muslims because it had brought together scholars from all over the world on the principle of everlasting brotherhood.

"We are meeting to explain the true Islamic teachings. To explain to the world community that Islam is a constructive religion, it brings prosperity and not destruction," he said.

He hoped the conference this time would help to enhance the understanding that Islam is for the good of mankind and not a burden to them.

Dr Tantawi also shared the view expressed by Dr Mahathir in his opening speech at the conference that the Muslims were currently divided because they could not agree with one another.

"Islam is a religion for unity, not disunity. It therefore doesn't not make sense for the Muslims to be divided over petty issues, by doing so allowing us to become weak and backward.

"I call on all ulamas to join hands to convey the true teachings of Islam to unite and build the strength of the ummah," he said.

He said Muslims also needed knowledge, strong economy and military hardware to defend themselves.

Asked on Dr Mahathir's suggestion on the use of the Gold Dinar in

commercial transactions, Dr Tantawi said although he was not well-versed on economic matters, he believed the Prime Minister knew better and had experience on the economy.

"So, I'm certain that economic experts have studied all aspects before the Prime Minister came up with the programme which has such a significant impact, and certainly it will bring a lot of benefit to the ummah and Islamic nations.

"In principle, I fully support Dr Mahathir's view," he aded.

-- BERNAMA

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