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Mahathir-Muslim

MUSLIMS MUST OBTAIN KNOWLEDGE TO GAIN SUCCESS

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 16 (Bernama) -- Muslims of the world should not be too obsessed with acquiring knowledge about Islam but should start gaining valuable knowledge in all other disciplines especially science and technology, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said the acquisition of religious knowledge alone was not sufficient to fight back the oppression against Muslims as the ummah would not be able to defend themselves with the religious knowledge gained.

"(As) Muslims (we) must be prepared to defend ourselves, it is quite clear that we are not prepared for the time being as we do not have the knowledge to fight the enemy," he said in his closing remarks at the International Conference of the Muslim Young Leaders here.

The Prime Minister said on the onset of the attack on Iraq many Muslims worldwide prayed for divine intervention to stop the attack but America went ahead and attacked Iraq and achieved resounding victory.

"Some of us felt that God did not grant us our prayers but this is not so, we defeated ourselves. Islam says that we have to be fully prepared to defend ourselves. In the case of Iraq it is quite clear that the Muslim community did not prepare for this," he added.

Dr Mahathir said the Muslim ummah even today believed that it could be defended by mere use of war horses and spears compared to automatic weapons used by the enemy forgetting that "only fighter planes and sophisticated weapons could deter such attack."

"We need weapons to strike fear in the hearts of our enemy. Some of us buy the weapons sold by the enemy and naturally they do not give us superior weapons but outdated ones. And when you have inferior weapons you cannot fulfil the obligations of the religion which is to defend the ummah," he added.

He said this was the result of too much emphasis on learning the religion rather than any other discipline which could help uplift the status and dignity of the Muslim ummah.

Dr Mahathir said Muslims worldwide had neglected to gain knowledge about other disciplines due to the misinterpretation of Islam by some who preached "that to gain knowledge was to gain knowledge in Islam and nothing else.

"Islam enjoins the learning and acquiring of knowledge. The early Muslims acquired the knowledge and expanded on it...they were good scholars in the early days especially in the field of science and maths," he added.

He said some interpreters of Islam had said that the knowledge gained by a Muslim should be knowledge on religion and Islamic jurisprudence and this made Muslims less capable in all other fields that they once used to master.

He said Islam was not just a religion but also a way of life but "now are we going to say that the Muslim way of life is living in misery, being oppressed and (to) beg. I don't think so."

He said Muslims had now failed to adhere to the true teachings of Islam to the extent that the religion was regarded as a religion of terrorists.

"There is nothing wrong with the religion but what is wrong is the interpretation and this comes from interpretation by human beings. This is where we go wrong," he said.

He said Muslims now must strategise and launch a movement to enable the ummah to gain the same strength as the enemy.

"There is no magic in their superiority over us. We have to achieve the knowledge they have in order to fight them smartly. Initially it would be difficult but we have to be patient. Over time we would become strong and defeat the enemy if we acquire the knowledge to do so," he added.

The Prime Minister said another reason why the Muslim world could not afford to fight oppression against the ummah was because Muslims were divided into many sects and teachings.

"We fight each other. Accuse each other of being unIslamic. But who are we to accuse other Muslims of not being a true Muslim. The religion, which was supposed to unite the people, is used to fight each other. This division is due to interpretation by human beings," he added.

Dr Mahathir said to become strong the Muslim community must return to the fundamental teachings of Islam and believe that all "Muslims were brothers."

Later at a press conference, Dr Mahathir said Muslims should stop "passing the buck" when it came to solving problems concerning the ummah.

"We simply cannot blame others for our follies. We have to do things ourselves and not blame someone else. This is important. Stop the finger pointing and do things yourself," he added.

-- BERNAMA

SR JM AO