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Mahathir-Message

DR M: MUSLIMS STILL ABLE TO PERFORM HAJ IN ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTIES

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 11 (Bernama) -- Muslims in Malaysia can still afford to perform a proper Haj without any obstacles despite the global economic uncertainties, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said Malaysians were enjoying a higher social and economic status although the cost of everything had escalated.

"Nevertheless, the cost of living in Malaysia did not shoot up suddenly, more quickly than an increase in our income. Hence, although the cost has gone up, the quality of living has also improved," he said in his message in conjunction with Hari Raya Aidiladha tomorrow.

Dr Mahathir said cost to perform the Haj had not increased to the extent that Muslims could ill-afford to perform the religious obligation unless someone was really poor.

He said those who saved money in the Haj Fund Board (Tabung Haji) enjoyed additional benefits for their savings from the investment dividends made by Tabung Haji.

Dr Mahathir said: "It's true that profits from investments have dwindled recently. We must remember that there is no business that gives fixed profit continuously unless we practise usury," he said.

Just like the people reap huge profits when the country enjoyed sound economic growth, they should accept the reality that during lean times, their profits would slide.

He said Malaysians should be grateful because in other countries there were no returns at all from investments made.

"When the economy has fully recovered, the people will enjoy higher savings.

"All these are tests of God. The Muslims must be patient and help towards the country's stability which will help stimulate the economy faster," he said.

In the context of Muslims, Dr Mahathir said Islam and its believers would not be exploited and humiliated by anyone if the qualities and attitude possessed when performing the Haj are maintained after the pilgrimage.

Although many Muslims perform the Haj more than once, there were still many at loggerheads with one another, still slander each other and were divided, he said.

"They and their religion suffer worse humiliation now than before from others. The Muslims are now the targets of slander and attacks, resulting in many to be killed and seriously injured. Sanctions have been imposed on Islamic countries, cutting them off from food and medicine supplies," he said.

Dr Mahathir said: "While we criticise and condemn others, is it not necessary for us to think and ask ourselves the reasons for all the misfortunes that have befallen us.

"Is it not because we have not practised all the teachings and guidance in our daily prayers.

"Is it not because the Haj and Umrah (minor Haj) we perform has an influence on us only during the pilgrimage and not after that?" he added.

-- BERNAMA

MFZ AHH MAI TS