

11 JUL 2003

Scholars-Tantawi

REJECT THE FALSE ULAMAS, SAYS SHEIKH AL-AZHAR

PUTRAJAYA, July 11 (Bernama) -- Sheikh Al-Azhar Dr Mohammad Sayed Tantawi has urged Muslims to reject the false ulamas so they will not be misguided.

"A person who pretends to be an expert in an area when he is not is a cheat and should not be followed," he said, speaking through an interpreter, at a news conference after presenting a keynote address on "True Religion in Facing Challenges of Globalisation" at the World Conference of Islamic Scholars here.

Tan Sri Abdul Hamid Othman, the main committee chairman of the three-day conference, had acted as the interpreter for the noted Islamic scholar from Egypt.

Dr Tantawi said the ulamas must preserve the fatwa and knowledge in providing guidance to the ummah.

He said this in response to a question as to how genuine ulamas could hope to lead the ummah effectively when some Muslims preferred instead to hear what the false ulamas had to say.

Dr Tantawi said a person who wanted to speak on matters relating to Islam must understand the Quran and Sunnah as well as equally versed in other religious matters.

Similarly, he said a person could not be accepted as a doctor if he did not study medicine.

To another question, he said he supported the view of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that the ulamas must share the same opinion in presenting their views in providing guidance to the ummah.

"In interpreting the Quran and Hadith, there are various interpretations and some had erred in the process. So it is the responsibility of the ulamas to correct errors," he said.

He said Jihad could not be associated with terrorism and extremism which were rejected by Islam.

"Jihad in Islam means to defend oneself and to help others who are oppressed. Jihad and extremism are not alike, the difference between them is like the sky and the earth," said Dr Tantawi, 74, who became the Sheikh Al-Azhar in March, 1996.

According to him, Jihad is wajib (mandatory) for defending the truth while extremism is the enemy of Islam.

During the dialogue session earlier, he said power was important for Muslims to develop their sound economy, agriculture and industry.

However, Islam rejected the use of power to oppress other people or invade other countries.

Muslims must also use power to defend themselves, he said.

On the equality between man and woman, Dr Tantawi said both had equality from their origin as they were created from one cell.

Man and woman also had equality on education and dignity, he said.

In his keynote address, he called on Muslims to practise religion properly in the age of globalisation.

"They should not interfere in anything beyond their area of specialisation. We are not professor of everything. We should always ask expert in specific area," he said.

On globalisation, Dr Tantawi said he did not understand it but if it was meant for justice and of benefit to all mankind then Islam would accept it.

He said globalisation must focus on the spiritual and physical development.

"If globalisation is meant by imposing the ideologies of other people on us then we will not subscribe and accept it.

"It should not also be subjected to foreign interference. Nobody should impose on us what we should teach," he said.

He said Muslims should reject globalisation if there was any form of blackmail in the process.

-- BERNAMA

JM AZZ ABG