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Mahathir-civilization

UNDERSTAND ISLAM BEFORE HOLDING DIALOGUE OF CIVILIZATIONS, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

PUTRAJAYA, July 10 (Bernama) -- Muslims should have a better understanding of Islam before going into a dialogue of civilizations with non-Muslims, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today.

He said, although it was a great idea to have such a dialogue, Muslims should first look at themselves because even among them there was no single understanding about the religion.

"We have to make sure that we know where we stand. Some people say that it is wrong even to talk to non-Muslims. It is wrong to be in contact with them, to work and to play with them...I think, this is a myth that has to be removed," he said at a dialogue after opening the World Conference of Islamic Scholars here.

The Prime Minister was responding to a question from a foreign participant who enquired whether the conference could result in a dialogue of civilizations as many experts were now talking about clashes of civilizations.

Dr Mahathir said it was important for Muslims to have an open view that Islam was no hindrance towards their interaction with the non-Muslims.

"At that time, I think when we have a dialogue with the non-Muslims we will be able to arrive at some positive results. But if you go there in order to just say how great Islam is, it will not do us much," he said.

"So let's have a better understanding of our religion because I feel very strongly that there are so many interpretations of Islam, including intolerance of other religions that we ourselves cannot get along," he said.

He said it was for this reason that the conference was important as it was hoped that the scholars would be able to reach a consensus on some of the issues.

Some 900 Islamic scholars including 90 from overseas are attending the three-day conference.

The gathering, themed "Islam in the Era of Globalisation", would discuss 22 working papers on politics, social issues, economy and development.

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