

06 MAR 2004

Feature-Hadhari

'ISLAM HADHARI' TO GUIDE MALAYSIANS TO ACHIEVE GREATER HEIGHTS

By Rosyatimah Tukimin

KUALA LUMPUR: Between a group of men performing the 'zikir' prayers in a mosque where they repeatedly sing the praise of Allah or God and another repairing a broken water pipe nearby, most people would pick the former for doing a noble deed.

But Religious Adviser to the Prime Minister, Tan Sri Abdul Hamid Othman, was quick to point out that while it was right on the surface of things to choose the first group, in Islam it was the second group of men repairing the broken pipe that was doing a much better noble deed because their action would benefit the masses more.

Abdul Hamid said there are two aspects to 'zikir' - verbal and physical

- both of which need to be given equal emphasis.

"It is an incomplete practice if Muslims only pray, doing the verbal 'zikir' and forget about development, which is the physical part, as Islam also calls on its followers to 'iqra' (read) or acquire knowledge and be civilised. What the second group did was fulfilling the other aspect of the physical 'zikir', also known as the 'hadhari' or civilisation.

"The reason why most Muslims are only focussing on the hereafter is mainly because they have been for years planted with the belief that anything that relates to the world which does not carry religious connotation is considered non-Islamic," he told Bernama in an interview recently.

"ISLAM HADHARI"

He said in a move to correct the misconceptions about Islam and its requirements, the Government has embarked on a programme aimed at making Malaysians aware of the true teachings of Islam and guiding them towards the revival of glories of the past Muslim empire.

Called 'Islam Hadhari' or Islamic State administration, the programme which was launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad

Badawi in 2002 when he was deputy prime minister, also sought to make Malaysians more forward-looking besides realising the need to efficiently manage the resources available in the country.

"The idea for the programme came upon realisation that the narrow understanding of the religion has resulted in Muslims being generally backward and not-forward looking. Such weakness has also created political anxiety in the country as opposition parties are taking advantage to undermine the development efforts by the Government.

"PAS, for instance, repeatedly claim that the implementation of the hudud and qisas (Islamic penal laws) is important for the creation of an Islamic state and many Muslims believe it. But the hudud is only a small fraction compared to the call to read (iqra') or acquire knowledge.

"Even the PAS people admitted that the hudud is only a small fraction of Islam," said Abdul Hamid, who is also chairman of the main committee to publicise the 'Islam Hadhari' programme.

He said with the programme, he hoped that Malaysians would also understand what constituted such a State.

#### SECOND PHASE

Abdul Hamid, who held similar post during Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's administration, said the programme would be on-going and that while the previous prime minister worked on the assimilation of Islamic values, Abdullah started full force with the 'hadhari' aspect.

"We are now in the second phase of the programme and about 500 civil servants, Malays and non-Malays, were given 'Islam Hadhari' courses during the first phase. The programme has been more intensive now since the launching of the second phase by the Prime Minister on January 30 as we want Malaysians to quickly understand this (Islam Hadhari) clearly. Under the programme, topics for talks vary from state to state as the audience and requirements differ," he said.

Reiterating the prime minister's assurance at various 'Islam Hadhari' events that the Government would not sideline the non-Muslims and that the

interests of the non-Muslims would be taken care of, Abdul Hamid said the beauty of Islam is that developments are meant for all and it is also the reason why many non-Muslim heads of government departments are willing to send their officers for the programme.

He said the programmes would make the Malays aware of the relevance of the profession to Islam. Bus drivers, doctors and engineers, for instance, have important roles in attending to the physical needs of the people, therefore, what they do are considered fulfilling their religious obligations in the 'hadhari' aspect.

He said once Malaysians had fully understood the true teachings of Islam and see the religion in its universal perspective, they could easily propel themselves towards greater heights and be respected by friends and foes alike, just like what had been achieved by past Muslim empires.

#### BREAK THE WALL

He also said that with strong Islamic values, Malaysians can also "break the wall" created by the colonists who had successfully segregated the religion from knowledge, which had been the root cause of the problem.

"During the Greek and Roman rules, for instance, only the aristocrats were allowed to read and gain knowledge but Islam has democratised education so it can be acquired by all," he said, adding that knowledge or education is the "window to civilisation".

Similarly, he said, when the country was under colonial rule only a few Malays were given the chance to have education in government schools, hence, the rest generally concentrated on religious studies.

Abdul Hamid said religion and knowledge should come as one and that the success of past Muslim empires was due to the fact that Muslims in those days understood the Quran well.

"As stated in the Quran, Muslims first and foremost are told to read (iqra') which means they must learn to know what they do not know through reading. While the faith (akidah) will always remain the same, civilisation

changes with times and that is why Muslims must read. If riding on horse carriages was once considered civilised, it is not so now as people today have cars that can bring them from one place to another faster," he said.

NEXT TARGET

Abdul Hamid said the programme would next target teachers, especially those teaching religious studies, so that all misconceptions could be corrected at grassroot level.

"We have to put it right certain unhealthy perceptions, such as the popular practice in sending children for 'tahfiz' (memorising the Quran) as Muslims generally have the belief that if one member of the family can memorise the Quran, then the whole family can go to heaven.

"That explained why we recently received reports that about 15,000 Malay children did not attend school...and categorised as dropouts. We found out that these children were actually sent to the 'tahfiz' school. We are not saying that sending children to such school is wrong but their education should be balanced," he said.

-- BERNAMA  
RT KGO