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Mahathir-Muslims

MAHATHIR URGES MUSLIMS TO STRENGTHEN POLITICAL AND MILITARY MEANS

By Ranga Kalansooriya

COLOMBO, May 26 (Bernama) -- Former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has urged the Muslim ummah around the world to unite and be strengthened both on political and military means to defend their rights against oppression.

"Let us be realistic. Without weapons how are we (the Muslims) going to defend ourselves when our lands are being looted and rights are being violated," Dr Mahathir who was honoured this morning by Sri Lanka's Muslim community for his contribution for betterment of Muslims worldwide, said mainly referring to the situation in Palestine.

Addressing the Muslim Council of Sri Lanka that bestowed on its highest honour Adams Peak Award during a felicitation session in Colombo soon after his arrival in the island nation, Dr Mahathir stressed the necessity of Muslims being united to face the present global challenges.

Dr Mahathir commenced his two day visit to Sri Lanka this morning with a red-carpet welcome at the Banadaranaik International airport.

Finance Minister Dr. Sarath Amunugama and Malaysian High Commissioner in Sri Lanka Nazeera Hussein received Tun Mahathir at the airport.

"We (the Muslims) are over 1.3 billion population but among the weakest of the global society. This is due to our disunity. The Muslims are highly fragmented and divided which are extremely detrimental to the community," he said.

Referring to the situation in the Middle East, he said that the situation had worsened since the absence of good practicing Muslims.

"I was unhappy to see how the Israelis were treating the Palestinians in their own land. These things do happen while other Muslims around the world look on. Why is this happening? I think because we are not practicing our religion well," he said.

N. M. Ameen, President of the Muslim Council of Sri Lanka urged Dr Mahathir to be a voice for Muslim minorities around the world.

"In Sri Lanka, Muslims are a minority and the situation is so in many countries. We need a leader of your stature to lead us and to guide us," he said.

Dr Mahathir during his tight schedule in Sri Lanka is expected to hold meetings with political, business and civil society leaders in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lankan President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga will host a banquet dinner for Dr Mahathir tonight.

First invited to be the chief guest and keynote speaker at Chartered Institute of Management and Accountancy (CIMA), Dr Mahathir will also attend the 10th anniversary of Telekom Malaysia's fully owned subsidiary Dialog GSM, Sri Lanka's premier mobile telecommunication service provider.

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