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Dr Mahathir - a great Islamic thinker whose ideas help Muslims

ALOR STAR, Sat. - The Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is a great Islamic thinker who not only comes up with ideas and plans to help the Muslims, but implements them effectively as well.

Special Affairs Department director-general Datuk Zainal Abidin Abdul Kadir said Dr Mahathir's success in bringing development to the country had made Malaysia the envy of other Islamic nations.

He said although there were quarters who felt the label of "Islamic thinker" should only be accorded to ulama, there were famous Islamic thinkers during the time of Prophet Mohammad who were not among the ranks of ulama like Saidina Omar Al-Khatib.

Other examples of Islamic thinkers, he said, were Mohamed Iqbal who helped promote the causes of Islam through education, and Jamaluddin Al-Afghani, who urged Muslims to free themselves from Western colonisation in the 19th century.

"We have to admit that Dr Mahathir has always included Islamic values and ideals in his plans and projects.

"His Look East policy, for example, was actually based on a concept greatly promoted by the Prophet in that Muslims should be encouraged to seek knowledge, even if they have to travel all the way to China to do so," he said after attending the launch of a one-day seminar on "Dr Mahathir: An Islamic Thinker in the 21st Century" here today.

The seminar was jointly organised by the Kedah and Perlis Special Affairs Departments.

Zainal Abidin said the department would continue to organise such seminars to help the people understand the concept of an Islamic thinker.

"By doing this, we hope the present generation will be motivated to emulate Dr Mahathir.

"We also hope to redress the notion which had been propagated by some quarters here that an Islamic thinker should dress or behave in a certain way," he said.

Meanwhile, one of the four speakers at the seminar, political writer Astora Jabat said the people need only look at Putrajaya to see how Dr Mahathir was able to turn to reality his vision of creating an Islamic township.

"The concept of Putrajaya which is situated within a garden with a river flowing through it, matches the concept of an ideal Islamic town," he said in his paper entitled "Briefs on the Islamic Thoughts of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad".