

16/05/2003

Fulfilling its obligations

IT is a prescient insight. In the Maulidur Rasul celebrations, Yang Dipertuan Agong Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin had observed that the Government's modernisation and development programmes have fulfilled its responsibilities to the people and country as required by Islam.

As previously pointed out by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Malaysia is an Islamic state. Those who reject it, be they from political Islam or the militant movement, may vehemently dispute this statement. But there is nothing contentious in the depiction of this country as an Islamic state. The reality is that the Quran itself does not specify any particular form of government. It only indentified a set of social and political values that are central to an Islamic polity. The central tenets are: The pursuit of justice through social co-operation and mutual assistance (Quran 11:119), the establishment of a non-autocratic and consultative method of governance (6:12), and the institutionalisation of mercy and compassion in social interactions (45:20).

Needless to say, these principles resonate strongly in our constitutional democracy. The Government's development and modernisation programmes satisfy Islam's dictate that the welfare of the people (tahqiq masalih al-`ibad) must be ensured. The jurisprudential concepts of al-masalih al-mursalah (public interest) and sadd al-dhariah (the blocking of the means to illegality) are evidenced in the Government's legislations and public policies that serve public interest and the nation's common good. As the King pointed out, the Government has provided for the practice of all affairs related to both fardu ain and fardu kifayah (individual and collective obligations) of the religion. Truly, the country's progress has been achieved within the framework of Islam.

But all these achievements must not be squandered by a sense of complacency and misplaced priorities. While we can be proud of what we have achieved, we cannot rest on our laurels. As advised by the King, the Muslims must build on the existing successes to ensure Malaysia's and the ummah's continued excellence. The fulfilment of worldly affairs is an injunction of Islam, one which cannot possibly be achieved without the pursuit of knowledge.