

15/05/2003

Requirements of Islam met (HL)

Sheridan Mahavera; Syed Izzaddin

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - The Government has fulfilled the requirements of Islam by developing the country and its people despite the erroneous belief among some that the religion only emphasises the ritualistic aspects of the faith.

Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin said the Government's modernisation and development programmes had fulfilled its responsibilities to the people and country as required by Islam.

"This includes providing for the practice of all affairs related to both fardu ain and fardu kifayah (individual and collective obligations) of the religion," said the King at the national Maulidur Rasul celebrations at Stadium Putra in Bukit Jalil.

Present were Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Fauziah, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

"However, there were certain parties which misinterpreted Islamic affairs as being only related to prayers, fasting, the collection of zakat (tithes) and performing the haj, and not inclusive of the country's economic, social, developmental and security concerns."

Such a perception, the King said, was wrong since the fulfilment of worldly affairs were also Islamic injunctions as they formed part of the fardu kifayah.

Prophet Muhammad, the King said, was not only a religious leader who brought Islam to his people but a statesman who could lead and administer a country, so much so that his nation-building efforts have become a model for all Islamic Governments which came after him.

The King said in the Malaysian context, the Government's efforts to develop the country were exemplary, whereby it was now considered a model developing nation.

"We are proud of our level of achievement and our position must continue to be strengthened and improved with all parties playing their roles and fulfilling their responsibilities.

"We have to keep in mind that prosperity in this world and the hereafter cannot be achieved if we Muslims do not strive for it.

"In conjunction with Malidul Rasul this year, I urge all Muslims to build on their successes to ensure the country's and ummah's (community's) continued excellence."

Meanwhile, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Abdul Hamid Zainal Abidin said Muslims must question whether they could really claim to be the "greatest of all peoples" as stated in the Quran.

This is especially so because Muslims, who comprise 26 per cent of the world's population, lacked quality traits and a majority of them led lives mired in poverty, suffering and depended on others, he said.

He said during the time of Prophet Muhammad and the Islamic civilisation after it, Muslims were more visionary, brave and faithful even though their number was small.

"Our relationship with God may be good, but our relationship with each other is bad. We lack good judgment; we are confused and we grope in the dark.

"Those who had followed Prophet Muhammad loved each other like brothers and sisters and hated their enemies.

"But look at us now. We can't tell friends from enemies. In fact, we

have even slept with our enemies and spurned our friends.

"We don't know how to distinguish between good and bad. So ask yourselves honestly: can we claim the title that we are the best people in the world?"

At a Press conference later, Hamid said there was an urgent need to increase the understanding of Islam among followers in the country as currently there were sections of the community which had their own interpretations of the faith.

The level of understanding, he said, was akin to a group of blind men holding on to an animal and interpreting the animal according to what part each was touching.

"Such piecemeal interpretations lead to an incomplete understanding of Islam," he said.

"We cannot understand and interpret Islam according to what we want, but according to the Islam of God and the Prophet.

"We urge that Muslims return to this understanding of Islam, which is essentially the true understanding of the faith."