

Dr Mahathir Urges Rich Nations To Give Small Fraction Of Zakat To Poor Countries
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LANGKAWI, Oct 29 (Bernama) -- Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has suggested that a small fraction of the zakat money from rich Muslim nations be set aside to help poor countries or poor people in other countries.

The former prime minister said the zakat money would be distributed to the eight Asnaf (eight categories of people), adding that in most of the rich Muslim nations, the eight Asnaf did not exist anymore.

He said that if they did exist, the amount of zakat money collected would far exceed their needs.

"But, if we consider ourselves as the Ummah, the community of Muslims using the zakat for the poor in other countries cannot be considered as breaching the categories of the people entitled to zakat funds," he added.

Dr Mahathir said this in his keynote address on the first day of the Third Langkawi Islamic Finance & Economics International Conference (LIFE 3) here today.

The three-day conference is themed 'Islamic Banking and Finance: Waqaf, Zakat and Sadakah As Community Empowerment And Strategies For The Economic Transformation Of The Ummaah'.

It is jointly organised by the Insaniah University College, Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and Islamic Research and Training Institute (IRTI).

Also present were Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Azizan Abdul Razak, IDB president Tan Sri Dr Ahmad Mohamed Ali Al Madani and Insaniah University College Rector Prof Datuk Dr Jamil Osman.

Dr Mahathir, who is also LIFE patron, said even a fraction of the 2.5 per cent zakat that was collected by all countries would be very substantial and it would go a long way to relieve the pain and sufferings of the poor.

He said it would also go a long way towards developing the poor Muslim countries, in terms of building infrastructures over a period of time and creating jobs for them, through investment in labour-intensive industries.

"Can we spend zakat funds on the infrastructures? If they are for alleviating the poverty and the wretchedness of the people in poor Muslim countries, I do not think we would be going against the injunctions of Islam," said the former prime minister.

Dr Mahathir said, for the purpose of collecting and administering the zakat fund, a special institution should be set up, manned by personnel from the contributing countries.

Muslims, he said, were enjoined to be charitable but they should not confine their largesse to Muslims only, adding that they should also help humanity at large, when the need arose.

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