

Muslim countries should strive to be on par with developed nations - Mahathir

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From Kamarul Ariffin Md Yassin

ISLAMABAD, March 22 (Bernama) -- Malaysia and other Muslim countries should strive to develop themselves to be on par with the developed nations of the world, said Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He said Malaysia thought that there was some scope for extending the cooperation with or between other Muslims countries.

“Today, there is not a single Muslim country which is considered as developed. Actually Malaysia had planned to become a developed country by 2020 , but unfortunately changes in the government (leaders) made that impossible to achieve

“But we still have this target to become a developed country by 2025. We hope this is not only confined to Malaysia,” he said in a joint press conference with his Pakistan counterpart Imran Khan here Friday.

Dr Mahathir began a three-day working visit to Pakistan on Thursday.

Dr Mahathir also said Muslim countries such as Malaysia and Pakistan needed to find ways of combating Islamophobia.

“Pakistan and Malaysia understand this issue. We notice that today there is much feeling of fear and anti-Muslims and that’s why 50 Muslims were killed (in the random shooting incident at a mosque in Christchurch, New Zealand last week),” he said.

He said the incidents which also involved Pakistanis and Malaysians in that area as victims,

happened because of the feeling of hatred that was generated by certain press and people.

“We need to learn how to handle this. It is not always by fighting back we can win. Malaysia’s experience is about winning the heart and mind of the people,” he said.

He said Malaysia and Pakistan can cooperate in that area, so that there would be better improvement in the perception of Muslims in the world.

“We (Malaysia and Pakistan) always discussed on terrorism. There are ways we can implement in order to reduce the atmosphere of fear, anger and hatred towards the Muslims,” he said.

Earlier, Pakistan accorded an official welcome to Dr Mahathir at the Pakistan Prime Minister’s House, and he was received by Imran upon his arrival at the Prime Minister’s official residence.

This was followed by a four-eyed meeting between the two leaders, and after that both prime ministers attended a Malaysia-Pakistan delegation meeting.

Later this evening, Dr Mahathir will be conferred the *Nishan-e-Pakistan* or Order of Pakistan, the country’s highest civilian award, by Pakistan President Dr Arif Alvi.

Dr Mahathir’s visit is at the invitation of Imran to attend the Pakistan Day celebration, which is observed on March 23 every year.

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