

LONDON, JAN 15 (BERNAMA) -- IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO SET UP AN ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS BODY WHICH IS FREE FROM GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE BECAUSE SUCH FREEDOM WOULD EXPOSE THE BODY TO INTERFERENCES AND INFLUENCES FROM VARIOUS PARTIES, PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TOLD MALAYSIAN STUDENTS HERE YESTERDAY.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT IN REPLY TO A SUGGESTION BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UMNO CLUB, UNITED KINGDOM, THAT AN INDEPENDENT RELIGIOUS BODY SHOULD BE SET UP IN MALAYSIA.

+IF WE WANT AN INDEPENDENT RELIGIOUS BODY, WHAT DO THEY WANT TO BE INDEPENDENT FROM?+ HE ASKED.

HE SAID THAT ALL MUSLIMS HAD A PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS HIS OR HER RELIGION, AND THEY SHOULD NOT ALLOW JUST A GROUP OF PEOPLE TO DETERMINE ITS AFFAIRS.

+THERE ARE NO PRIESTS IN ISLAM, AND IT IS UP TO US TO KNOW THE BASICS OF THE RELIGION SO THAT WE CAN THINK FOR OURSELVES,

+ LOOKING BACK TO ISLAMIC HISTORY, THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD BROUGHT ONLY ONE VERSION OF ISLAM, BUT AFTER HIS DEATH CAME MUSAILIMAH (AL-KAZAB) WHO CLAIMED TO BRING A VERSION OF ISLAM, AND WAS IMMEDIATELY HUNTED BY THE CALIPH ABU BAKAR, + DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID.

THEN CAME THE FOLLOWERS OF ALI (WITH SHIISM), HE SAID, AND EVEN AMONG THE MUSLIM ORTHODOXY (AHLI AL-SUNNAH) THERE NOW EXISTS FOUR MAJOR SCHOOLS, AND MANY MINOR ONES.

TO ILLUSTRATE AN EXTREME EXAMPLE OF DEVIATION, HE TOLD THE STUDENTS OF THE DRUZES +WHO BELIEVE IN A HEAVEN NEAR CHINA.+ THEN THERE ARE ALSO MANY DEVIATIONIST +TARIKAT+ (LITERALLY MEANING +THE PATH+, TAKEN BY FOLLOWERS OF SUFISM).

+WE HAVE BANNED THE QADIANI (THE AHMADIAH --A SECT STARTED IN INDIA BY GHULAM AHMAD). THESE PEOPLE WERE ONCE MUSLIMS TOO. (WITH THESE DEVIATIONS) HOW CAN WE ALLOW THESE PEOPLE TO BE INDEPENDENT?.+

OF THE TARIKAT, THERE IS THE NAQSHABANDIYAH, AND THE TARIKAT OF THE WHIRLING DERVISHES IN SUDAN AND TURKEY, WHO BELIEVE IF THEY TWIRL AROUND THEY WILL FIND THE PATH TO HEAVEN, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID.

HE ALSO MENTIONED THE BELIEF IN THE MESSIAH (+THE MAHADI+) NOW PREVALENT AMONG FOLLOWERS OF AQDAM IN MALAYSIA.

THE GOVERNMENT COULD ACT AGAINST THEM, HE SAID, BUT THERE ARE MANY AMONG THE MALAYS WHO BELIEVE IN THEM THAT IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO BRING THEM BACK TO THE BASIC TEACHINGS OF THE QURAN AND THE TRADITIONS (HADITH) OF THE PROPHET.

HE ASKED THE STUDENTS TO BE SIMPLE IN THEIR RELIGIOUS BELIEF, AND TO APPLY A LOT OF COMMON SENSE TO THEIR APPROACH TO ISLAM.

RELIGION, HE SAID, COULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO BE TOO FREE AS THERE ARE MANY OPPORTUNISTS WHO WANT TO USE IT. ---BERNAMA