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Mahathir-Sultans '''

By Wan A. Hulaimi

LONDON, Dec 19 (Bernama). — The system of constitutional monarchy in Malaysia will be destroyed if the Sultans get involved in politics, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad told Malaysian students here Tuesday.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir, who is on a private visit here, said that constitutional monarchy as practised in Malaysia did not mean that the Sultans were not involved at all in politics, but it barred them from direct involvement in party politics.

+In Malaysia we want both our democracy and our kings. And that is why we say our monarchy is governed by the constitution, while the elected government rules,+ he said in reply to a student at a dialogue session at Malaysia Hall.

He added: + We do not want to throw out this system of constitutional monarchy. It is a good system, and we want to continue with it. But, please do not get (the Sultans) involved in politics.+

The alternative to the present system was one where the king, as chief executive, ruled by decree as in Iran under the Shah, he said, and +we know what happened to the Shah who, before his downfall, had his feet kissed in public by his followers+. — more

♥19/12/10-32MST

CNS4490

R GE 19-12 00246 EA393

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The Prime Minister said that democracy gave the government the benefit of a feedback from the people as expressed through their votes; something which the Shah did not get, and which contributed to his downfall.

+We want to hold our kings in high esteem, not to topple them. We do not want a republic. But the kings must know their role,+ he said.

He explained to the students that that was why Umno must debate this issue to show that this feeling about the proper role of the kings already existed among the people.

Replying to questions on the role of Islam in the country, he said that religion should not mix with politics, as it (religion) belonged to everybody, and it was wrong to say that Muslims who did not vote for an Islamic party were apostates (kafirs).

He said that to him, being trustworthy was a very important thing in Islam, the ability to be honest not for want of opportunity to be otherwise, but because Muslims were brought up believing that what was not theirs should not be taken.

+If we are honest and sincere it is far more important than to be merely seen as Islamic,+ he said.

But there are people who laid greater emphasis on the form rather than the content of the religion, said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir. — more

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CNS4491

R GE 19-12 00235 EA394

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Mahathir-Sultans 3 London '''

+Islam fails today because the Muslims do not follow the values of Islam, such as brotherhood. If we are divided, that is not Islamic,+ he said.

He said that there were people who, when talking about Islam, turned to the question of women, but neglected questions of sincerity, honesty, unity s unimportant.

The Malay Muslims in Malaysia, being homogeneous, should not have problems among themselves, but they have created their own problems.

+What is the point of creating an Islamic party? What is the use of saying to Muslims if they do not vote for an Islamic party then they are not Muslims?+ he asked.

The golden age of Islam produced people like Ibn Rushd and Ibn Sina, but during the Renaissance, the West took over while Muslims retreated, saying this was secular and that was secular.

That was why, he said, that during the recent Umno General Assembly in Kuala Lumpur, he emphasised the need for those learned in Islamic law to have good rapport with those who are experts in other fields.

To a student who suggested that Umno could overcome some Muslims' objection to nationalism by changing the party's name to United Muslims National Organisation, Dr Mahathir said that Muslims did not have the right to use Islam for political purposes. — more

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CNS4492

R GE 19-12 00238 EA395

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Umno's nationalism was not the fanatical type which pushed religion aside, as was done by Kemal Ataturk in Turkey who regarded religion as an obstacle to the Turkish people, he said.

On the New Economic Policy Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said that the day will come when the bumiputras will have to be told that they can no longer do what they are doing for them, but said he might not be around to see it.

He explained that the purpose of the NEP was not to bankrupt the bumiputras who squander the benefits given to them, but to help them obtain the skills to gain an equal economic position with the non-bumiputeras.

The government had been criticised for the NEP, he said, but when the critics were invited to sit on a committee to produce a proposal which they themselves could agree to by consensus, they had still not done so even after two years.

+It seems that those who are good at criticising are not good at doing. Because of that we are forced to come up with our own NEP for the 1990s,+ he said.

Since his arrival on Sunday the Prime Minister has already had a meeting with former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, and will be meeting her successor John Major at Downing Street today. — Bernama

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