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Mahathir-future

DON'T WORRY, MAHATHIR TELLS NON-MUSLIMS

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept. 14 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today non-Muslims in the country need not worry that the existing religious tolerance would not be maintained in the future even after his time.

"We're trying to spread this idea of tolerance to as many people as possible so that if somebody dies, the idea doesn't die but will go on," he said during a dialogue at an international seminar on "The Role and Influence of Religions in Society" here.

The Prime Minister was answering a question from the floor whether the existing tolerance would be maintained or would his successors interpret Islamic principles differently and adopt a narrow, restrictive view.

Dr Mahathir replied: "I always believe that even if you change people, nothing really disastrous is going to happen."

Otherwise, it would be difficult as everybody had to live up to a certain time, he added. -- more

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R GE 14-09 00130 EA760

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He said: "What he can do while he is around is to try to implant ideas and philosophies in as many people as possible. This is what we are doing in the government today.

"We try to govern according to a certain understanding and belief so that even if the person is not there, the idea is there.

"I don't think Malaysians should worry about this."

Even the constitution guaranteed freedom of worship although Islam was the official religion of the country, he added.

To another question, Dr Mahathir said the predominantly Muslim civil service was quite fair to everyone in the implementation of its duties. -- more

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"If they are not, then today we'll be having fights," he added.

This was also reflected in that not much tension was directed against the government because of the activities of the civil service, he added.

Even though there might be some members of the civil service who might create problems, there was always the government, comprising people from different races and religions, to handle the matter.

He said: "If the matter comes up to us, we will try to reduce this lack of tolerance on the part of some civil servants."

The four-day seminar which began yesterday is jointly organised by the Goethe Institute and Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (IKIM). -- Bernama

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