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Mahathir-Islam

ISLAMIC NATIONS MAY BE THE TARGET OF WESTERN ATTACKS, SAYS MAHATHIR

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KUALA LUMPUR, Nov. 4 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad warned today of the great possibility that the Western powers would divert their attention to Islam following the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the communist system.

He said: "There are indications that the West now regards Islam as a threat to them.

"There is a possibility that we will become the direct target of Western attacks and, based on the weak position now, we can be totally destroyed by such attacks."

Opening the 1993 Umno General Assembly at the Dewan Merdeka of the Putra World Trade Centre here, Dr Mahathir, who is UMNO President, said the image of Islam at present was at a low ebb and frequently linked to backwardness and failure in almost all aspects.

The bias and prejudice of non-Muslims against Islam was caused by the Muslims themselves; he added. -- more

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"The wealth bestowed on the Islamic nations has not benefitted them and instead cause them to be at war among themselves and become the testing ground for Western weapons to the extent that Muslims and Islamic nations were easily used by the foreign powers," he said.

He said that the radical and extreme actions of a small number of Muslims had led the non-Islamic world to believe that that was the Islamic way of life that was being preached whereas it was a deviation from the normal Islamic practices.

As a result, Muslims were helpless when their fellow Muslims in Bosnia were daily shot at, murdered and driven away while those in Somalia faced hunger and death, he added.

In this context, Dr Mahathir said, Malaysia was making efforts to convince the world that Islam was actually a progressive religion and not at war with anyone.

This was being done through the Institute of Islamic Understanding, Bank Islam, Islamic Takaful Company and the International Islamic University. -- more

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By providing understanding to non-Muslims regarding Islam, it could be shown that the Islamic system was rational and had the capacity to meet human needs and that the Islamic education system could exist side by side with the other systems.

"Determination of the objective to make Malaysia a developed nation by the year 2020 was made as a result of our awareness to rectify the perception of the non-Islamic world, that an Islamic nation need not necessarily be backward and weak," he said.

He said that Malaysia, at the very least, should return to the era of Islamic glory when the mastering and pioneering of knowledge and sophisticated industries were largely found in the Islamic nations.

Recalling the beginning of the fall of Islamic nations, Dr Mahathir said that the decline of the Muslims began when a group of Turkish Osmaniah ulamak who feared the loss of influence, prevented the acquisition of knowledge other than those related to religion.

Similar elements were now found in Malaysia so much so that many young Malays were uninterested to acquire knowledge apart from religious knowledge and abandoned education branded to be secular, he added. -- more

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"This makes it difficult to restore the strength of Muslims in Malaysia and the situation worsens because some learned people in the religious field try to take advantage of the Malays' strong adherence to religion," he said.

Dr Mahathir did not dismiss the need for a group of people truly learned and possessing deep knowledge in the religious field.

"We also do not deny the role of the group in the administration of an Islamic nation to ensure that policies and approaches are not contrary to the Islamic teachings," he said.

Dr Mahathir also reiterated Umno's stand that it was a party which gave priority to a balance between the worldly pursuits and the hereafter, not extreme and fanatical and practising moderation in line with Islamic teachings. -- Bernama

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