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Mahathir-Sabah

NEW SABAH GOVT NOT OUT TO CONVERT ANYONE TO ISLAM

KUALA LUMPUR, March 24 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister ⁸Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the new state government of Sabah under the ~~Barisan Nasional~~ (BN) is not there to convert non-Muslims to Islam.

Speaking at a dialogue with the participants of the Conference on Islam and Tolerance held in conjunction with the official opening of the Institute of Islamic Understanding (Ikim) here, Dr Mahathir called on Muslims in Sabah to be fair to the non-Muslims.

According to the prime minister, there had been cases in the past when the Muslim-led state government showed its zeal to convert non-Muslims to Islam.

This they did because they saw the central government strong on Islam, Dr Mahathir said.

"They tend to wield their power wrongly," he added.

"But we advised them that it is not necessary to convert them, they could but they should not force the non-Muslims," he said. -- more

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Mahathir-Sabah 2 (last) Kuala Lumpur

"But their urge was so strong, so you find the same people in Sabah converting to Islam up to three times. It was not a conversion at all. It was a political necessity," Dr Mahathir said.

The prime minister made these remarks in response to a question posed by Prof Dr Fathi Othman of the University of California in the United States.

Prof Fathi, who yesterday presented a paper on "Modern Democracy and the concept of Shura", said many people wondered how the federal government managed to deal with Sabah, a state which has very different religious and ethnic background.

Dr Mahathir said that now that the BN was back in power in Sabah, it would try to balance the situation.

"We are making an effort to bring about closer relations between the people of different religions in Sabah as how it is seen in Peninsular Malaysia.

"For that, we try to rotate the term of the post of chief ministership every two years. For the first two years, the post will be held by a Muslim, the next two years a Christian, and the other two years maybe a Buddhist," he said. -- Bernama

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