

Muslim-led administration should not

PM: Government

By Farush Khan and Ahmad Suffian

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs.

A Government led by Muslims must not be unjust towards its non-Muslim population. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said, adding that it should instead promote fairness and reject all forms of cruelty and evil.

He said a Muslim-led Government in a multi-racial and multi-religious society would not oppress its non-Muslim people if it adhered to the teachings of Islam.

Dr Mahathir was speaking at the opening of a two-day conference on "The Government in a plural society" at the Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia conference hall in Jalan Langgak Tunku, off Jalan Duta, here.

Later, when asked at a dialogue with participants, on the Government's approach regarding the Islamic administrative concept in Malaysia's plural society, Dr Mahathir said it was not rigid.

"We do not want to create chaos. As far as I understand what we are doing is not against the teachings of Islam."

He said some quarters accused the Government of being un-Islamic because there were non-Muslims in the Government.

Dr Mahathir said as much as it could afford, the Government "tries to follow Islam" which is not rigid in many things, including prayers, fasting and other obligations.

"Islam is simple. Only those who are *taasub* (follow blindly) make it difficult."

He said that sort of followers were prepared to kill and see wars and destruction just because of differences, and these were contrary to Islam.

Earlier in his speech, the Prime Minister argued that if the administration was viewed as unjust, the image of Islam would be adversely affected.

"If the Malaysian Government is found to be fair to all races, the image and sanctity of Islam will certainly be upheld."

Dr Mahathir pointed out that justice in Islam was "no different from the concept of universal justice".

"If oppression or inequality of penalty is regarded as unjust in the universal view, it is the same in Islam," he said, adding that the emphasis on justice, however, was clearer and stronger in Islam.

He said in the Quran and *hadith* (records of the Prophet Muhammad's sayings and deeds), it was stated "hundreds of times" that God wanted the Muslims to be fair and they were prohibited from taking unfair actions.

"If there are unjust and cruel actions by the Muslims or Islamic Governments, it is not because of Islam, or that this is advocated by Islam, but rather because of the Governments or the Muslims who lead them who ignored the teachings of Islam. They merely follow their desires."

Unfortunately, he said, when the Muslims or Islamic Governments acted unjustly, they often linked their actions with the teachings of Islam to justify them.

"In fact, they often force the *ulama* and religious heads such as the *mufti* to issue *fatwa* (religious rulings) to justify their acts of cruelty."

Dr Mahathir said in Islam, the penalties imposed on Muslims and non-Muslims were of equal severity.

"For instance, during the Medina administration, there is no proof that non-Muslims were given more responsibility or imposed penalties more severe than those imposed on the Muslims."

"Nowhere in the teachings of Islam, in the Quran or *hadith*, did it advocate injustice to non-Muslims," he said.

According to Islam, he

be unjust towards others must be fair

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said, Muslims should not force others to embrace the religion or subject non-Muslims to injustices.

He said an Islamic Government or a Government under Muslims' control should be considerate, just and good.

"If it is unjust and not good, if it oppresses the people, Muslims or non-Muslims, then that Government is neither an Islamic Government nor a Government which follows the teachings of Islam."

He said just because those holding power in the Government were Muslims did not necessarily make it an

Islamic one.

"Only when the administration is based on or follows the teachings of Islam can it be considered Islamic."

He said in this modern era, there were various kinds of administrations. There is no one system of Government that is totally free from deviations from the noble universal values and the values propagated by religions.

Such situations, he said, occurred purely because of human weaknesses.

He said sometimes in certain countries, there were Governments known for their autocratic and oppressive administrations as well

as opposition towards Governments by people who were no better.

"In Bosnia-Herzegovina, we see today a Government led by Muslims being opposed by the Serbs who have committed ethnic cleansing."

Under Islam's concept of justice, he said, penalties were commensurate with the crimes committed.

"But God loves those who are considerate and are willing to forgive. Therefore, though the Serbs have committed terrible crimes, to avenge the atrocities, also through ethnic cleansing is not mandatory."

Dr Mahathir said like the non-Muslims, Muslims who

had to stay in non-Muslim countries must respect their Governments and their people.

"They certainly do not like to be suppressed or separated from their religion by force.

"As long as they are allowed to continue with Islam and as long as they are not disturbed, they should not cause problems for the countries they are staying in."

He said non-Muslims who were minorities in Islamic countries must be accorded treatment similar to that enjoyed by minority Muslims in non-Islamic countries.