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Mahathir-Islam

DON'T BRING IN DEVIATIONIST TEACHINGS, MAHATHIR TELLS MUSLIMS

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 21 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today warned Muslims against bringing in deviationist teachings which, he said, would not only cause disunity but also create intense enmity within the community.

They should resist assimilating "new" interpretations and teachings, like the Shi'ite teachings in other Muslim countries, simply because they were practiced there, he said.

"When they follow a sect adopted by a country, it may cause tension between our country and the other country," he told reporters at the second day of his Hari Raya open house, at Sri Perdana, here.

He was asked to comment on the statement made by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Othman that Shi'ite teachings in the country had reached a worrying stage, especially among students.

A former university lecturer Uthman El Muhammady was also quoted as saying that some lecturers in local universities were trying to spread Shi'ite teachings.

Dr Mahathir said the conflict between Muslims in other countries was non-existent in Malaysia because the Malays on the whole adopted the teachings of the Sunna sect.

"What is the need for bringing the Shi'ite teachings here... We have no quarrel if other people want to believe in the Shi'ite teachings in other countries but let all Malays follow one teaching only as members of the Sunna sect," he added.

Dr Mahathir said there was an increasing number of deviationist groups in the country but the government was confident of dealing with the situation to bring the followers back to the true path of Islam.

Pusat Islam had identified 47 deviationist groups, 15 of which were still active involving about 1,000 followers.

Asked if the government was contemplating drastic steps to curb the problem, Dr Mahathir said the government needed to find a way to check Shi'ite teachings.

Yesterday, Deputy Home Minister Datuk Megat Junid Megat Ayob said the ministry was prepared to assist Islamic religious authorities take action against organisations and publications involved in spreading Shi'ite teachings in the country in the interest of Muslim unity.

Dr Mahathir, who is also the Home Minister, said the situation was under control and did not pose a threat to national security.

He said: "At this time, there is none but we always look to the future. If we don't check it early, when it expands and possibly involves national figures and other people, at that time when we try to correct it, it will be a problem.

"So, before it reaches that stage, we have to take action."

Asked what approach would be adopted to deal with the problem, he said the government must identify the person responsible.

Dr Mahathir was also asked whether he would be meeting with Louis Farakhan, leader of the Chicago-based "Nation of Islam" in the United States, who was expected to arrive here later today.

"There is no programme, as far as I know, to talk to him," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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