

04 APR 1997

Mahathir-politics

MALAYSIA, THE BEST EXAMPLE OF AN ISLAMIC COUNTRY, SAYS MAHATHIR

KOTA BAHARU, 4 April (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Malaysia is the best example of an Islamic country, developed and peaceful despite different political beliefs of its Muslim population.

He said this is not the case in some Islamic countries which are in a turmoil because their Muslim populations are in disagreement and at war, leading to them killing each other.

"In Malaysia, Umno and Pas are still political enemies but it doesn't mean that we cannot work together or act excessively to the extent of destroying out country," he said when opening a textile factory belonging to KUB Malaysia Berhad in the Pengkalan Chepa industrial area, near here.

Also present were Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat and several federal ministers.

During the function, Dr Mahathir also witnessed the signing of a joint venture agreement to develop a petrochemical complex between KUB and Keloil Sdn Bhd, a subsidiary of Kelantan State Economic Corporation.

The Prime Minister said the joint venture agreement itself is a proof that economic development should not be politicised although there are (political) differences.

He said in some Islamic countries, the governments cannot last long because the people are always fighting each other, holding demonstrations, riots and strikes, making it impossible to provide a proper government.

"We hope the situation in Malaysia will not be like that. My thanks not only to government supporters but also to those who oppose the (federal) government because they do not pose much problem," he said.

In the impromptu speech, Dr Mahathir also explained the federal government's intention in allowing the cricket team from Israel to participate in the current ICC (International Cricket Council) Trophy in Kuala Lumpur, inspite of the objection by certain groups including Pas.

He said the international media which is controlled by the West and the Jews is always projecting an bad image of Islam even to the extent of portraying an ugly image of Muslims.

"This is our opportunity to show them that Muslims in Malaysia can be an example to other Islamic countries and that there is no truth to what the West thinks of us because we don't have such an image," he said.

During the function, Dr Mahathir also reiterated that the King Faizal and Jawaharlal Nehru awards, which he received recently, belong to the people, not for his alone.

He said that without the contribution and support from the people, it will not be possible for a country to achieve outstanding progress although it has many leaders of calibre.

"A leader may have the best brain but without the people he will be no where, like is happening in some countries where the leaders are good but the people are fighting among themselves," he told the 2,000 strong audience, comprising Pas and Umno supporters.

Dr Mahathir, apparently pleased with their presence, described the function as a historic gathering of not only supporters of both political parties but also the leaders of the federal government and Pas-led state government.

This was the first time that the Prime Minister was accompanied by Nik Aziz and Pas state leaders during his several official visits to Kelantan

since the 1995 general election.

On the objection by certain groups and the media in Malaysia to the presence of the Israeli cricket team recently, Dr Mahathir could not understand why they did not raise objection on international issues such as what is happening in Europe where the Turks had their homes torched in an attempt to force them out of Europe.

He said western countries also oppose Turkey joining the European Union (EU) because they believe "Europe is not for Muslims".

The textile factory, opened by the Prime Minister today, was built in May last year and began operation three months later.

The factory employs 600 workers and produces KUB's line of "Canggih" school uniforms as well as sportswear and childrenwear.

It also produces sport apparel for export on contract for international brand such as "Adidas" and "Umbro".

Meanwhile, the petrochemical complex, to be jointly developed by KUB and Keloil, will be the centre of downstream activities of the oil and gas industry in Kelantan.

Describing both KUB's projects as the Malays' capability to venture into bigger business, Dr Mahathir said, "the Malays can succeed if they manage their business properly".

The Prime Minister also took to task some Malay entrepreneurs who misused bank credits, not for develop their business but for personal benefit like ubying Mercedes Benz and other luxury items.

He said Malay entrepreneurs are now entering a new era to the extent of running a company with profits of up to RM1,000 million, something which they never dreamt of.

Earlier, KUB chairman Datuk Hassan Harun said both projects are the beginning of the company's programme to act as a catalyst to the economic development of Kelantan which he said he lagged behind other states.

He said KUB to-date has three major projects in Kelantan with some 1,000 workers. -- BERNAMA

RAR/AU ABG