

07 AUG 1998

Mahathir-Mosque

ENSURE THAT MOSQUES ARE NOT ABUSED, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 7 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Muslims in the country must ensure that mosques are not abused by people or groups for their own selfish interests.

He said that mosques had been built for the benefit of the Muslims but the activities in several mosques in the country had created disunity among the Muslims.

"We must get rid of them by whatever means," he said when opening the RM8.3 million Bukit Aman Mosque at the grounds of the Royal Malaysia Police headquarters here.

Dr Mahathir said that it was obvious that these people had other priorities including political motive which could destroy the Muslims.

He said that in some places the mosques were used to incite Muslims to cause disharmony in the country and this was contrary to the true teachings of Islam.

"This should be prevented from spreading," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that for as long as Muslims in the country uphold the true teachings of Islam instead of being extremists or intolerant of other religions, the nation would remain peaceful and achieve much progress.

"In this country and also in some other countries, there are interpretations of Islam which are not based on Islamic teachings.... Unfortunately, many feel that Islam advocates such extremism," he said.

As such, he said, they often resorted to actions not in line with Islam as though to prove that they were the ones who were true Muslims, like killing other fellow Muslims they feel were not true Muslims.

He said that there were also Muslim countries which adopted an extremist view of Islam to the extent of oppressing the Muslims, believing its to be in the name of Islam, like in a certain country where women were oppressed as they were believed to be of lower status and should only be subservient to men.

The women were prevented from participating in the development of the Muslim community and disallowed from acquiring knowledge essential for such purpose, he said.

Dr Mahathir said that since there was an equal number of men and women, the Muslim community would lose half its force for the development of the community if they were to be cast aside.

"In this way, Muslims become weak because they weaken themselves. This is a practice which we should eradicate from the community," he said.

He said that the Muslims could learn to attain happiness from the Quran but usually such teachings were not given emphasis unlike some other aspects which in the end create disunity.

Some 2,000 people later joined Dr Mahathir, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, Special Functions Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Othman and Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Noor to perform Friday prayers.

-- BERNAMA

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