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Why Muslims are still weak

Ramlan Said; Hamidah Atan

MALACCA, Tues. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Muslims had remained weak, uninfluential and oppressed because many still subscribed to old-fashioned beliefs that were against Islamic teachings.

He said it was the actions of those who claimed themselves as religious and champions of Islam that contributed to the religion attaining an old-fashioned image.

"These are the people who have destroyed the religion," he said when opening the 41st national-level Quran recital test at the Kubu Stadium tonight.

Among those present were Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali and Chief Minister Datuk Seri Abu Zahar Isnin.

He said since the image of Islam could be easily tarnished by those acting for their own interest, it was important that all Muslims possessed a true understanding of the religion.

Alluding to a recent story about a man who turned into a pig when he died and was buried behind his house, he said the fact that this was accepted as true showed how poor and weak the understanding of some Muslims was on the contents of the Quran.

"If the Government feels that efforts to propagate Islam should be strictly monitored, this is because there are people out there who dare to use the religion and the name of Allah for their own self-gains."

Dr Mahathir said the fact that such baseless stories could weaken the faith of other Muslims were not of concern to these people.

"If they are not afraid of telling lies and commit sins, this is because they have weak religious convictions."

These people often use religion as a front because they know they can easily influence other Muslims, who, because of their lack of understanding of the religion, tend to believe anything related to it.

"Their action gives an impression to the non-Muslims that Islam is conservative. And these people who create such a disgrace are of the opinion that views of the non-Muslims on Islam are not important at all."

Such an attitude, he said, would be a loss to Islam as it would hamper further efforts to propagate the religion as people would not be attracted by something regarded as old-fashioned.

He said the reading of the Quran and interpretation of its contents was one effective way of propagating the religion.

"This recital event which we hold every year contributes to this objective. Therefore, we must continue to hold it as we could gain a lot from it."

Dr Mahathir said the country should be proud with the progress it had so far achieved in organising and running the test.

"When the teachings of Islam are spread by a better understanding of the contents of the Quran, we will be protected from baseless and confusing interpretations by irresponsible people."

He said there were certain quarters who felt that the test which involved rhythmic reading of the Quran should not be held as they viewed it as against the teachings of Islam.

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