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Mahathir-Islam

ISLAM'S IMAGE TARNISHED BY PEOPLE WITH THEIR OWN AGENDA, SAYS PM

MELAKA, Oct 27 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight that the image of Islam has been tarnished and made to appear so backward by people who project themselves as being pious and highly knowledgeable in the religion, for their own interest.

As such, he said, it was essential that Muslims have a deeper knowledge of the true teachings of Islam so that they could protect the image of Islam.

He said that Islam's image could be so easily tarnished and those who made Islam seem so backward were people who project themselves as being pious and highly knowledgeable in the religion.

"These are the people who undermine Islam," he said when opening the 41st national-level Quranic reciters assembly themed "The Nation's Welfare, Our Responsibility", at the Kubu Stadium, here.

"If Muslims are today no longer influential and are weak and oppressed, the reason can only be their backward thinking which is actually contrary to Islam," he said.

"If the government is of the view that the teachings of Islam need to be monitored, the reason is that there will always be people bold enough to use the religion and the name of Allah for their own interest," he said.

Dr Mahathir cited an example of such backward thinking the alleged incident of a man who died and his body turning into that of a pig and as such had to be buried in his backyard.

For such an alleged incident to be believed reflected the shallow understanding and belief in the teachings of the religion especially the contents of the Quran among some Muslims.

It never crosses their minds that such claims could destroy the faith of Muslims and "if they are not afraid of lying and having sinned, it could only be that their faith in Islam is weak," he said.

"And these people frequently hide behind the mask of religion and they know that Muslims however shallow in their religious knowledge, strongly uphold their religion and will believe whatever is related to the religion," he said.

Such actions gave an impression to non-Muslims that Islam is so backward but those who created such an impression felt that they need not bother about the perception of non-Muslims, he said.

"Such an attitude will not benefit Islam as it retards the growth of the religion and its influence," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that reciting and revealing the interpretation of the Quranic verses was an effective way to spread Islam and much benefit had been derived from the holding of the Quranic reciters assembly.

"In spreading knowledge of the religion by revealing the contents of the Quran, we will be saved from irresponsible people who resorted to erroneous interpretations and teachings," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that the Quranic reciters assembly was only a small part of the religious activities organised by the government but it had succeeded in promoting Islamic teachings in the country and abroad.

The annual national Quranic reciters assembly was first held in 1957 and the international level since 1958.

"There is no doubt we have succeeded in promoting Islamic teachings among Muslims in all corners of the world through the Quranic reciters assembly. Muslims are not only exposed to good recitation, we have somewhat

united the ummah in the various continents," he said.

A total of 27 men and women reciters representing the various states are taking part in the reciters assembly which will end of Saturday. Kelantan has only a representative in the men's category.

-- BERNAMA

MOZ NO RM