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Mahathir-Islam

MAHATHIR PLEDGES TO PRESEVE ISLAM'S SANCTITY

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 23 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the government shall constantly uphold the sanctity of Islam and safeguard it against manipulators using the religion for selfish political or personal gains.

He gave this guarantee when pledging allegiance on behalf of the government and the people at the installation of Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah Alhaj Almarhum Sultan Hishamuddin Alam Shah Alhaj as Malaysia's 11th Yang di-Pertuan Agong (paramount ruler) here today.

Dr Mahathir cautioned elements with ulterior motives not to split and weaken Muslims by committing sacrilege against Islam and undermining Muslims' faith in the religion.

"In matters of religion, your majesty's government will continue to uphold Islam as the country's official religion besides guaranteeing other Malaysians the freedom to profess in other faiths.

"The government shall continue to inculcate Islamic values in national administration," said Dr Mahathir.

The prime minister said Malaysia's Islamic banking and insurance as well as other Islamic systems were now being emulated by other Islamic countries because of their successful implementation.

Dr Mahathir also said the country owed it to the people for their support and conviction in the plausibility of the government's radical measures that contributed to the successful economic recovery.

"Their solid support has enabled the government to concentrate fully on recovery efforts besides attracting foreign and domestic investments," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the government would like to see the private sector playing a more active role in rejuvenating trade and commerce so that the economy could re-grow to the level of that before the 1997 economic crisis.

"It is indeed noteworthy that the unity and understanding among the people is ever stronger," he said.

The prime minister said the economic downturn had glaringly made Malaysians aware of the importance of staying united and preserving racial harmony.

"The New Economic Policy, which aims at distributing wealth among the Bumiputera by expanding the economic cake without taking away the rights of the other communities, has averted racial strife arising from disparity in economic achievements.

"Compared to the other countries, this country is spared of racial conflicts," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the tolerance and mutual respect among multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-lingual Malaysians formed the key to Malaysia's prideful success.

"This unity has been a key factor in enabling the government to preoccupy itself with nation-building efforts," he said.

On gearing the nation for the new millennium, Dr Mahathir said the numerous and comprehensive preparatory measures by the government were meant to make Malaysians face the coming challenges boldly and confidently.

A new federal administrative capital erected in Putrajaya and a new hub for world-class information technology research and development in Cyberjaya were two of the government's strategy to further modernise civil administration and equip Malaysians with the knowledge required to face a

more sophisticated, challenging and competitive new millennium, he said.

On foreign relations, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia would continue to remain actively involved in enhancing ties with all countries.

"The nation will continue placing emphasis on special cooperative endeavours with developing countries and upgrading South-South ties.

"We'll also strive towards intensifying economic activities with traditional trading partners through promoting greater direct foreign investment," Dr Mahathir added.

-- BERNAMA

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