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Mahathir-Umno (Ulamas)

MAHATHIR CLARIFIES OPPOSITION'S ALLEGATION HE REJECTS ULAMAS

KUALA LUMPUR, June 20 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that he respects ulamas who have knowledge and of high morals but cannot respect those who admit being ulamas but have other interests like politics.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said that to him, an ulama should not interpret religion for his political interest and that his interpretation should be consistent in whatever situation and purely in the interest of the religion.

Winding up the debate at the 53rd Umno general assembly here, he said: "I acknowledge ulamas as people who are knowledgeable and good but not all who admit to being ulamas are good."

Dr Mahathir said that people who admit to being ulamas but have political interest were fond of claiming to be descendents of the Prophet and should not be criticised as their status was just a step below than of the Prophet.

He said that he had previously criticised ulamas but they were those in such category.

"If a person were to say that God uses obscene language, I cannot accept that person as an ulama and I also cannot accept his followers. Even if he is a president of an Islamic party, I cannot accept that," he said.

The prime minister said that in the history of Islam, it had been proven that many people with self interest had interpreted the religion similar to that of their interest to the extent that 200 years after the death of Prophet Muhammad, there are now 600,000 hadis.

He said that Imam Al-Bokhari, after studying them, only accepted 7,000 of the hadis.

"It is proof some people had come up with hadis for their own interest and not the religion," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that when Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat, who heads PAS' council of scholars, said that God uses obscene language when defending Shahnun Ahmad's novel "Shit", he had stated that the PAS leader was not saying the truth.

"I have also read the Quran and many hadis but have not come across words used by Shahnun Ahmad in the Quran," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that he was prepared to pay RM100,000 of his own money to anyone who could point out to him the obscene language used in "Shit", in the holy book.

The prime minister said that Umno members should not be afraid to face PAS as Umno had its own capability and accurately interprets Islam.

He said that he was happy that the general assembly this time was well attended and it reflected a high fighting spirit.

Umno, he said, was responsible in defending the race and religion and all views at the general assembly had been expressed with sincerity to achieve this end.

-- BERNAMA

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