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Mahathir-mosques

MOSQUES ARE PLACES TO UNITE MUSLIMS, SAYS MAHATHIR

JITRA, July 19 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today urged the opposition parties especially PAS to stop using mosques and suraus to achieve their political ends, and to leave them be as places of worship.

The Prime Minister said to the Muslims, mosques are also places where they could get to know one another and foster friendship while praying together.

He also called on PAS not to misuse Friday sermon to sow the seeds of hatred against the government and its leaders because the sermon is a forum to urged Muslims to strive for righteousness and to explain to them the teachings of Islam.

"Islam doesn't ask us to hurl slander at others (through sermon) and divide the Muslims," he said at a meet-the-people session at Kampung Ketol, Batu 17, Mukim Tunjang near, here.

Dr Mahathir regretted that while Islam preaches Muslims as brothers, there are those who even fought inside mosques, all because mosques have been misused for political interest.

"Once outside the mosque, if you want to fight, go fight. But, it is better not to fight," said Dr Mahathir who is also the Member of Parliament for Kubang Pasu.

Still on the subject, he said he remembered a fight at one time between the body guards of two state leaders from the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) for a meeting in Taif.

They fought inside the Masjidil Haram because each side wanted their leader to leave the mosque first to attend the opening ceremony in Taif, after performing the Asar prayers and a hearing religious talk that moved even the speaker to tears.

"I hope the Muslims in Malaysia are not like that," he said.

Dr Mahathir said PAS and Umno certainly had political differences but this should be resolved outside the mosque because Islam does not ask its followers to use the mosque to curse and hurl nasty words at political opponents.

"If they cannot agree with us, that is all right, because not everyone would agree, but don't bring politics inside the mosque as this could encourage others to use religion for political interest," he said.

The Prime Minister said he felt sad because PAS leaders who claimed to be religious intellectuals did not use their knowledge for the good of the Muslims such as seeing that the youngsters were not involved in drug abuse.

He said that even though drug abuse involved Muslim youths, he had never heard of PAS leaders talked about the danger of indulging in drugs in their ceramahs.

On the hand, he said they preferred to hurl various accusations at government leaders with the aim of inciting people's hatred for the sole purpose of political power.

Dr Mahathir said in their obsession, a PAS leader even had the heart recently to accuse Umno leaders and followers as disbelievers when the same person not too long ago claimed that it were the work of the extremists within the party who had left to join Umno.

"What is sad is that when a person, looked upon as a learned man of religion, said recently that Islam allows its followers to use foul language because God does too. This is blasphemy...."

"Don't mix politics with religion...it can destroy religion, if

misinterpreted," he said.

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