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Mahathir-Islam

WRONG INTERPRETATIONS OF ISLAM PREVENT MUSLIMS' PROGRESS

KUALA LUMPUR, April 7 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said that wrong interpretations of Islam have prevented Muslims from making progress and competing with other religious creeds.

He said in the 1400 year history of Islam, there have been many wrong interpretations of the religion.

"Malays are Muslims, but Islam has lots of interpretations. Muslim politicians interpret Islam in order to justify what they are doing. This can be wrong," he wrote in his article which appeared in Japan's Mainichi Daily News yesterday.

Dr Mahathir's article in the newspaper's Opinion/Analysis page entitled "Dr Mahathir's World Analysis" is published on the first Monday of each month in both its Japanese and English editions as well as through the Internet.

"They want to do something that is not Islamic, but in order to gain people's acceptance, they say "This is Islamic". If this is by religious leaders, people tend to believe it," said the prime minister.

Dr Mahathir said Islam gave strength to the Arabs when they first embraced it and so it was not the reason for Muslim backwardness.

He said that later on, Muslims became backward because Islam was wrongly interpreted by people with objectives of their own.

"So what we try to do here is to go back to the real original interpretation of Islam, which was able to make the Arabs very progressive and established a very great civilisation," he said.

Dr Mahathir also wrote that today's students think that it was their right to go to university but not their responsibility to study.

He said the problem today was not the opportunity to study, but the desire of the person to get a better education or not.

"When I went to university in Singapore, I was considered one of the luckiest students in Malaysia. At that time, very few people particularly indigenous people were able to go university, and very few could get scholarship, so I was fortunate to obtain one," he said.

He said the situation had changed today as there are thousands of scholarships available, both domestically and internationally.

Dr Mahathir said some of the students got involved in activities that distract them from concentrating on their studies, such as politics or demonstrating or debating how the country should be governed.

"As a result, although they get the opportunity, they do not receive the amount of education that they should be getting," he said.

"They believe that they know about how a country should be run. I don't mind if students are interested in politics, but they shouldn't go to university just to become politically active. We spend public money to educate them. It's irresponsible to waste funds earmarked for education," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that the government spends 20 per cent of the national budget for education, more than any other country.

He said that there was really no reason for the students to fight the government as the expectations of his generation had been fulfilled.

"The status of the minister of education in our government is very high because we think that education is the way to make our people upwardly mobile," he said.

The prime minister said if the country wants to progress, people must

be educated.
-- BERNAMA
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