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`In-fighting alarming' (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - The in-fighting among Muslims in the country is alarming, to the extent that children are being moulded at a tender age to hate and spite government leaders.

Making reference to events leading up to the recent Lunas by-election, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he was shocked to hear that children were shouting "Bunuh Dr Mahathir" (kill Dr Mahathir) and other spiteful remarks.

These remarks, he said, included the allegations that he was "un-Islamic" and did not respect the ulamak and Prophet Muhammad.

"The fault lies not with these children who have no knowledge of their actions but with their parents who are Opposition supporters. They use their children as tools for their political purposes," he said.

He was speaking at a breaking of fast organised by the Federal Territory Umno at the new Wilayah Persekutuan Mosque on Jalan Duta here, where he presented gifts and donations to about 1,300 poor and needy from the city.

Dr Mahathir said although Malaysia was a role model to other developing Islamic countries, the sad truth was that unity and harmony which existed among Muslims for many years had now deteriorated due to vicious lies and rumours.

Disunity had reached such a level that Muslims, among themselves, chose not to pray together and even did not allow their children to marry into families supporting different political parties.

"It seems that the disunity can no longer be bridged. Even places of worship are not spared and being used as venues to spread such lies and rumours," he said.

He said the majority of these "culprits" had gone to the extent of seeking outside assistance to undermine the Government.

"What these people do not realise is that unlike them, the Barisan Nasional has proven that it does not need any outside assistance at all. We are capable of developing the country ourselves," he said.

Having run out of ideas to undermine and discredit the Government, Dr Mahathir said, these people hoped outside interference would help them achieve their cause.

He said Malaysia, under the BN leadership, had long practised the proven democratic process which was now being exploited and misused by certain quarters to confuse the rakyat.

"If they continue to blind the people with their version of how democracy should be, their actions will eventually lead to the destruction of the country," he added.

The Prime Minister said it was time the rakyat realised that these outside forces were more than willing to interfere merely because Malaysia was vocal about their foreign policies and ideologies.

He said the people should not be influenced by these "kind gestures" from foreign countries, and realise that their focus should be on restoring unity among themselves.

He also urged Muslims to be thankful for all the good things they had received from the country and not to fall victim to those out to use them for personal gain.

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