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Mahathir-Violence

MALAYSIANS MUST SUPPORT TOUGH PUBLIC LAWS

BANGI, Nov 23 (Bernama) -- Malaysians must support tough public laws as long as the dangers of social and political clashes are imminent, the Prime Minister said today.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said, "Admittedly, all laws must be honed and refined from time to time. That is to say our laws must be in consonance with changes."

"But so long as the dangers of social and political clashes are imminent... like originating from misuse of religion for political ends, Malaysians must support tough public laws," he said in his keynote address at the opening of a conference on "Terrorism and Political Violence" here. His speech was read out by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Rais Yatim.

Dr Mahathir said the relevant laws that secured national security and public order must be viewed and appreciated from this perspective.

The one day conference was organised by the International Institute of Public Policy and Management (INPUMA) of Universiti Malaya and the Division for National Security of the Prime Minister's Department.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had to jealously guard its inter-racial, inter-religious and inter-cultural harmony.

"The moment the Malaysian inter-racial, inter-religious and inter-cultural balance and harmony disintegrate, that will be the end of a peaceful and happy Malaysia," he said.

He said through the New Development Policy, the government sought to enlarge the economic cake, so that the redistribution programme could be managed in an expanding economy and thereby the development efforts could benefit everybody.

Nevertheless, he said, "In spite of our success in nation-building, our ethnics and religious cleavages will always be the continuing challenge that confront us."

"Racial sentiments and religious dogma are still powerful forces in Malaysia that can prejudice and jeopardise racial harmony," he said.

Indeed the politics of religion had given rise to much difficulty and sufferings even in Malaysia, he said.

Discord and disunity espoused by wilful misinterpretation of certain tenets had resulted in a divide among Muslims as exemplified by recent events in the country, he said.

Politics of hatred emanating from religious bigotry had shown alarming possibilities, the Prime Minister said.

"When a Muslim calls another Muslim an infidel or kafir, just because the so-called kafir does not subscribe to his or her type of political-religious mould, this can ultimately lead to manifestations of violence and finally terrorism," he said.

"We must not be caught by any tendency of terrorism. It is difficult and most costly to undo the culture of violence once it takes root. In the end, the nation suffers from a continuing sequence of violence as different groups jostle for power," Dr Mahathir said.

He said the real threat to national security and political stability was the uncontrolled ambition and design of aspiring political leaders who would resort to any means, including the use of violence to attain their personal aim to be in a position to wield power in the country.

He said these leaders might raise problems, issues and present alternatives and opinions with the intention to mislead through unlawful means and such actions might trigger protests and violence among their followers.

The Prime Minister said the government could not accept violence as a

legitimate solution to problems and Malaysia had adopted the principle of Constitutional Government and Parliamentary Democracy.

"In Malaysia, people have the right to dissent and to voice alternative opinions. The dissenters and the opposition have rights but the government cannot run away from its primary responsibility and duty of keeping the peace, and law and order as per the majority mandate."

"We cannot allow people to exploit sensitive religious and racial issues, for such actions can ignite the flames of violence and conflict and in turn destroy everything that we have crafted and built since attaining our independence," Dr Mahathir said.

"The central principle of Parliamentary Democracy, that we have adopted is the necessity to establish a legitimate government, a government elected by the people, a government set up to administer and serve the needs and interest of the people and the nation."

"What needs to be emphasised is that in our democratic system, the government can be changed, through the election process. The change is lawful and legitimate only if it is done through the legal process," he added.

--BERNAMA
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