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Mahathir-Raya

MUSLIMS SHOULD USE CELEBRATION TO CLOSE RANKS, SAYS DR M

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 26 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has called on Muslims in the country to set aside their misunderstandings and rivalries in religion and politics, at least for a day during Hari Raya Aidilfitri through the practice of exchanging greetings and seeking forgiveness among themselves.

The Prime Minister said they should appreciate the original meaning of exchanging greetings, that is none other than to return to the teachings of Islam which enjoin them to strengthen the spirit of brotherhood and unity.

"Let's greet each other with a heart free from any suspicion against a fellow Muslim on this auspicious day," he said in his Hari Raya message aired over RTM tonight.

He said even as people exchanged greetings they were bound to have differences of opinion because human beings were involved in too many activities to be able to agree with each other on everything.

Surely there would be differences of opinion on economic, religious, social and political matters, he said.

He said in Islam, it was normal to have differences of opinion, sometimes minor but sometimes serious, among people of the same "mazhab" (religious sect), what more between people of different "mazhab".

"But all are Muslims. Differences in terms of interpretations and emphasis, from the aspects of certain practices do not make the followers of any "mazhab" un-Islamic," he said.

"What more for we who adhere to the teachings of Iman Shafie; if there are minor differences between us in terms of interpretations or other things, this will not make us un-Islamic as long as we believe in the one God and His messengers. No one can take away our Islamness. We are still the brothers and sisters of fellow Muslims wherever they are."

Dr Mahathir said by the same token, no Muslim would lose his Islamic stature simply because of differences in political, economic, social or personal matters with other Muslims.

"On this auspicious day, we can greet each other with a heart free from any suspicion against a fellow Muslim. Perhaps the tension between us and our rivals can be forgotten for that day only, but maybe the closeness will last and fully restore our close ties, God willing," he said.

Dr Mahathir also urged Muslims to reflect on the big benefits arising from the unity and closeness between Muslims (Muhajirin) who migrated together with Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina and the residents of Medina, which eventually became the basis for expansion of the Muslim empire.

"Remember how unity between the Ansar and Muhajirin in Medina had produced an Islamic nation that was strong and could spread Islam and unite the people of the whole Arabian peninsula," he said.

He said before that the Arabs were weak and did not have civilisation like the other races around them because of their obsession with their own "kabilah" (groups) and preoccupation with fighting among themselves.

With the spirit of Islamic brotherhood, unity and agreement in doing good work and loyalty of followers of the Ulil-Amri (leader), in a short period the Arab race which was previously behind time and ignorant had managed to set up an Islamic empire stretching from Spain in the West to the borders of China in the East, he said.

But when the brotherhood and unity of Muslims became weak again, the empire collapsed at the beginning of the 20th century when the Arabs were no longer willing to be ruled by Muslims of the Turkish race, he said.

Dr Mahathir said Arab Muslims at that time cooperated with the enemies of Islam purportedly to free themselves from the clutches of the Turks, but

unfortunately the result of the ensuing rebellion was not liberation but colonisation by the French, British and Russians.

"All these can be a lesson to we Muslims in Malaysia. Let us not return to the "jahiliah" (ignorance of pre-Islamic days) culture by accepting "mungkar" (bad) teachings and rejecting the "makruf" (good). Friendship and doing good are things commanded and disunity and doing bad are prohibited. This is the meaning of "amal makruf nahi mungkar" (practising good, rejecting the bad)," he said.

He said almost all Islamic governments in the world which opted for democracy faced problems and could not be developed because Muslims were so obsessed with their own political parties to the extent of forgetting the call for Islamic unity.

In the history of Islam, the system of administration used was the feudal and autocratic system, but Muslims just like other people do not wish to see a return of the autocratic feudal system of administration, he said.

"Actually political parties are only to allow a choice to be made on who is considered qualified to administer a country. After the selection is made, the people should return to their way of living together as one community like before the election," he said.

But in democratic Islamic countries, the split among followers of parties was deep and permanent because of their obsession with their own parties and reluctance to accept the victorious side, he said.

"The calls of Islam that all followers uphold their faith in Allah, that is the Islamic religion and should not be disunited remain as verses in the Al-Quran only because they fail to be practised," he said.

Dr Mahathir advised Muslims in Malaysia to reduce their obsession with parties and instead to revive the spirit of brotherhood in Islam.

"Political beliefs should not affect our brotherhood as Muslims. Islam takes precedence over party and ideology for Muslims," he said.

The Prime Minister said if Muslims were not progressive and were weak, they should blame not only others but also themselves for not following and practising Islamic teachings which required them to be united.

"Whenever an Islamic country begins to make progress, there will be Muslims who try to stop this progress," he said, adding that their excuse was that the government was purportedly un-Islamic and secular.

Although it was explained that developing Muslims and Islamic countries was part of religious obligations, in fact a "jihad" (holy war), these groups chose to close their hearts, he said.

"What influenced the movement to topple governments of Islamic countries was the deliberate misinterpretation of the Al-Quran and Hadis to make "halal" (permissible) the un-Islamic actions of these groups.

"When the followers accept and join the activities of these groups, they will become fanatics and are willing to do anything. That is why we see rebellions and killings against Muslims committed by Muslims and weakness of governments of Muslim countries," Dr Mahathir said.

He said Malaysia was fortunate because despite efforts by a handful of people obsessed with certain groups to weaken the government, and who at times abetted foreigners who hated the government, such attempts were generally rejected by the majority of Muslims in Malaysia.

Dr Mahathir said unity and cooperation among Muslims in Malaysia and also with fellow Muslims in other parts of the world had become more important in the globalisation era because if Malaysia was not careful it could be colonised again.

-- BERNAMA

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