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Mahathir-Islam

PM SAYS FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF ISLAMIC LAWS NOT POSSIBLE

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 24 (Bernama) -- The Malaysian government does not reject Islamic laws but it is acknowledged that under prevailing circumstances, it is not possible to implement all of them fully, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

Opening an international seminar on "Islamic Law in the Contemporary World" here today, he said the fact that Islamic laws were largely uncodified opened them to many interpretations, some of which must be contrary to the tenets of Islam.

He said an attempt had been made in this country to codify such laws pertaining to certain societal behaviour and activity but complete codification was not possible because Malaysia is a multi-racial and multi-religious country.

"However the laws of the country are not such as to negate the principles of Islamic laws and Islamic justice. The punishment may be different but the principles are the same," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Muslims of today, including the Malays, were less tolerant and cared little for the views of others when practising the teachings of Islam, including the interpretation of Islamic laws and their implementation.

He said it would seem that a Muslim was only Muslim if he was harsh in the execution of Islamic laws.

"Even when Islam permits flexibility, it should be rejected in favour of rigidity. The greater the rigidity in the interpretations, the more a Muslim is faithful," he said cynically.

Dr Mahathir said Islam today appeared to be different from the religion of peace and tolerance as brought by the Prophet Muhammad.

Islam had become a rigid, intolerant and seemingly unjust religion to the faithful and to others because of the fanaticism and misplaced orthodoxy of people with vested interest, he said.

There could be no doubt that Islam upheld justice and if it did not seem to do so, it was not because Islam was wrong as it must be its practitioners who were wrong.

He also said rivalry between Muslim groups in politics had led to each trying to outdo the other in the rigidity of interpretation and in their desire to be holier than their rivals, they had misquoted and misinterpreted.

Turning to judges, he said different judges were likely to judge and sentence each according to his own assessments, resulting in similar cases receiving differing assessments and sentences.

He said such differences would not be fair or just and this would not be good for the perception of justice in Islam.

"It is not that Islamic justice as prescribed by the Quran or Hadis is inherently unjust. It is just that human fairness and weaknesses have tainted the laws and justice is often denied," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said there were some Muslims who would consider that if the enforcement of Islamic laws resulted in the victim being punished and not the criminal, then it would still be just.

He said there was a need to demonstrate that Islamic laws and enforcement were as just as could be and while such laws could not be in full accord with modern liberal thinking, they could be compatible with universal concepts of justice.

Islamic justice, he said, would not differ much from Western justice when it came to punishing the criminal and according justice to the victim.

The two-day seminar, jointly organised by the Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (Ikim) and the Department of Syariah Judiciary

Malaysia, is aimed at examining efforts to implement Islamic laws in the contemporary Muslim world.

It attracts the participation of judges, lawyers, scholars and practitioners of Islamic laws from nine countries namely Egypt, Nigeria, Yemen, Iraq, Turkey, Indonesia, Russia, Brunei and Malaysia.

-- BERNAMA

MAM AHH RYN