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Act fast, says Dr M

Ramlan Said; Annie Freeda Cruetz

PUTRAJAYA, Fri. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today it was important for governments to recognise internal threats and act fast before it is too late.

But before pre-emptive measures are taken, the Prime Minister said the authorities must be able to detect danger signs that could threaten peace and order.

"Malaysia is accused of being unduly nervous. We do not want things to happen, therefore harsh measures sometimes need to be taken. Once the danger becomes too big, it is too late," he said at a dialogue with ambassadors and high commissioners from the Organisation of Islamic Conference member countries at Wisma Putra.

Dr Mahathir later joined the dignitaries and their wives for the breaking of fast and prayers.

The Prime Minister said this in response to a question from Sudanese ambassador Mohamed Adam Ismail who had asked about internal and external threats faced by Malaysia.

Dr Mahathir said administering a multi-racial country was not easy.

"If we see any sign of people breaking the law, we will move in. As you know we have the Internal Security Act which has come under heavy criticism (by the West) but today we see them applying laws which are even worse."

Afghanistan ambassador Abdul Sattar Murad asked about the threats by quarters who think they were better Muslims, to which Dr Mahathir replied the best defence was equipping oneself with sufficient knowledge so that wrong interpretations of Islam by the so-called ulama could be rebutted.

Dr Mahathir also fielded questions from the ambassadors of Indonesia, Nigeria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

Earlier, the Prime Minister said Islamic countries would continue to be oppressed because they are weak, disunited and have neglected pursuing knowledge and modern skills.

He said it was also because Muslims were more concerned about trivial issues to prove who would be the better Muslim among them. "In some countries, certain Muslim groups want to replace their government which they consider as un-Islamic.

"The governments therefore have to allocate of lot of resources to counter the threats, and as a result, development is neglected."

"The Muslims were so busy arguing on these that they missed the opportunity to participate in the industrial revolution while the non-Muslims like those in the West benefited very much from it."

Dr Mahathir said if one cared to study the Quran in whole, they would realise that the religion advocated the quest for knowledge, progress, development and acquiring of wealth.

He said the mistake of Muslims rested in the wrong interpretation of Islam, like the need to only acquire religious knowledge.

Stressing the need for unity among the Muslim world, Dr Mahathir said they should stand united, especially on issues where they shared common grounds such as solving the Palestinian issue.

The Prime Minister said despite agreeing that they were brothers as advocated by the religion, Muslims were fighting and killing each other.

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