

15 DEC 2001

Mahathir-Raya

CHANGE CULTURE, DR MAHATHIR TELLS MUSLIMS

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 15 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Muslims should change their culture and place more emphasis on the substance rather than the form of the Islamic teachings.

The prime minister said the true teachings of Islam prioritised efforts to improve one's achievements in this world and preparations for the hereafter.

He said this in his Hari Raya message aired over Radio and Television Malaysia (RTM), TV3 and Astro tonight.

Dr Mahathir said Muslims should strive to master all kinds of knowledge which could strengthen and enhance the resilience of Muslims in Malaysia besides knowing the true teachings of Islam.

"Don't let anyone obstruct our children from acquiring the knowledge that can free us from having to depend on others, on our enemies, for our needs, for our defence because such act betrays Islam and the Muslims," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Muslims in Malaysia and other Islamic countries as well as the non-Islamic countries must be knowledgeable and efficient to compete with non-Muslims anywhere.

Muslims must reflect and analyse why they were oppressed and easily attacked and defeated, he added.

"The time has come for Muslims to stop blaming God and work harder, harder than non-Muslims anywhere," he said.

He said Muslims must understand why the Islamic countries had become weak and why no Muslim important day could be celebrated properly and with joy.

"We must ask ourselves whether this misfortune of the Muslims is due to fate or because we have neglected the true teachings of Islam," he said.

The true teachings called on Muslims to strive to change their lot and not to just ask God to save them, he said.

"Don't simply blame fate whenever something bad happens because the bad comes from us and it is we who make us, Muslims, weak and easily oppressed.

"Realising this, we must resolve to return to the true Islamic teachings and start by re-forging relations among the Muslims and living in brotherhood as Muslims," he said.

Dr Mahathir urged Muslims to work harder than the non-Muslims, who are developed, and move as fast as them.

"Surely, if we are slower than them, the gap between us and them will widen with the passage of time.

"Remember how easy it is for us to be pressured, vanquished and toyed with by them today. If we are left further behind in future our fate will worse than now," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that Malaysia being a multiracial, multireligious, multicultural and multilingual country, non-Muslim visitors should be received with sincere friendliness on Hari Raya to foster ties among the races in the country.

"Hari Raya gives us a chance to show the goodness of Islam to everyone and this can counter allegations by certain parties out to discredit Islam and Muslims. We can show what Islam really is and the character of Muslims according to the true Islamic teachings," he said.

He also urged the people to remember the contributions of the security forces who worked with such professionalism and dedication without rest or

leave so that the people could celebrate Hari Raya safely.

He advised road users to drive carefully so that they could reach their destinations safely.

In his message, the prime minister, on behalf of the government and people of Malaysia, also extended condolences to the Sultan of Selangor, Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah, the Selangor royal household and the former Permaisuri Agong, on the death of Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah last month.

Dr Mahathir also expressed happiness on behalf of the government and people of Malaysia over the appointment of Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Tuanku Syed Putra Jamalullail as the 12th Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

-- BERNAMA

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