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Mahathir-Opposition

DR MAHATHIR TAKES THE OPPOSITION TO TASK OVER ISLAMIC STATE ISSUE

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 2 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has taken the opposition to task for refusing to acknowledge that Malaysia is already an Islamic state.

Because of this, he said, extremist elements believed that the only way to achieve an Islamic state was to use violence.

"That's why they form the groups with the intention of overthrowing the present government and setting up what they call an Islamic state.

"And if they try to do that in a multiracial country like Malaysia where Muslims are only 60 per cent of the population, obviously there is going to be instability," he said in the 'In Conversation' programme aired over TV3 tonight.

Dr Mahathir was asked on the recent exposure of militant activities in Malaysia aimed at overthrowing the government and efforts by the opposition to set up its version of an Islamic government.

He said there was no necessity for the opposition to talk about an Islamic state because it was already achieved.

"But they are trying to hoodwink their own followers to support them. But the non-Muslims are very wary about their (the opposition's) perception of an Islamic state. Because of that, they are not going to reveal what they mean by an Islamic state," he said.

To a question, Dr Mahathir said those who followed the teachings of Islam would become moderates as the religion was one which was moderate and accommodative.

"But of course, like all religions, there are extremists. What you see in some Islamic states is that the extremists have sort of gained influence over the majority and people dare not challenge them.

"So Islamic states often appear to be irrational, extreme and unable to grow," he added.

Dr Mahathir was the first Asean leader to appear on the hour-long programme which saw him being interviewed by four Asean journalists.

The production is the result of a collaboration between Malaysia's TV3, Thailand's iTV, RCTI of Indonesia and ABS-CBN of the Philippines.

An estimated 300 million people in the region watched the programme which gives Asean leaders the opportunity to air their views on various matters.

-- BERNAMA

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