

02/09/2001

Extremist plot revealed (HL)

Sarban Singh; Deborah Loh

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today revealed plans by a network of extremists who were bent on establishing Islamic governments in Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines.

The Prime Minister said this group of people have established a league with connections in these countries to create a union of Islamic nations.

"These are some of the people who had gone to Afghanistan and all that. They have formed a league that spans Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines. They have this idea of creating a so-called Islamic country which is a union of all these three," he said in obvious reference to Kumpulan Militan Malaysia (Malaysian Militant Group).

Early last month, police arrested 10 people under the Internal Security Act for alleged involvement in KMM activities prejudicial to national security.

A Malaysian, Taufik Abdul Halim, 26, who was detained in Indonesia in connection with bomb blasts at two Jakarta churches and a shopping complex, is also suspected by the Malaysian authorities of being a KMM member.

Dr Mahathir said the Malaysian Government knew of the connections between the groups in Malaysia and their connections in Indonesia and the Philippines.

"We know that they have connections in the Philippines and Indonesia. They have big ambitions but they can't really do it...it is not realistic," he said. He was speaking to reporters after opening the inaugural Malay Education Congress at the Putra World Trade Centre.

The two-day congress is organised by the Peninsular Malaysia Malay Teachers Union and a body calling itself the Group of Concerned Malays.

Dr Mahathir said there was a group of 300 students in universities who no longer felt they were Malays but Muslims.

"They enter universities as Malays but they think they are Muslims whose role is limited to hitting out at the government.

"When we talk to them about Muslim brotherhood or other obligations in Islam, they do not understand," he said.

Dr Mahathir said this group has also published a book in which he was referred to as a kafir (infidel).

"They call me kafir, firaun (Pharaoh), Dajal (anti-Christ) and anjing (dog). So when other students read that a government is led by a Dajal, obviously they would oppose," he said.

Dr Mahathir said some of these people had become so worked up that they have established extremists groups. They were even willing to take up arms to bring down the Government.

Dr Mahathir said this group was not bothered if they were successful or otherwise as they were fanatics.

He said outsiders had also instigated students by saying that the Government was kafir as it had failed to implement the hudud (Islamic laws).

Asked how serious the problem was, Dr Mahathir said it was very serious as these people were bent on overthrowing the democratically-elected Government through violence.

"It is serious but unfortunately we are not in a position to reveal everything yet. It stems from this idea that Malaysia is not a Muslim country and it is run by a kafir," he said.

Dr Mahathir said whenever a government in an Islamic nation progressed, attempts would be made to assassinate its leaders as they were deemed unIslamic.

Asked how would the Government tackle all these problems, Dr Mahathir in jest said the authorities needed support from the Press.

He said the Press should not be like the National Human Rights Commission which would term any action against such groups as unfair.

In his speech, Dr Mahathir said national schools were today similar to Islamic religious schools in terms of philosophy and practicality.

"If someone in a school says that something needs to be done in the name of Islam, no one will question him although the directive did not come from the ministry or the head master.

"In some schools, the footballers are told to wear long pants as wearing shorts is unIslamic," he said.

He said there were many more examples where other aspects of Islam were forced upon pupils.

"What is more unfortunate is the fact that the performance in these schools has not improved," he said.

Asked about Cuepacs' decision not to accept a proposal by the Government requiring civil servants to sign an agreement that they would serve loyally, Dr Mahathir said he was willing to discuss the matter with the union.