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Mahathir-Primitive

HUMAN CIVILISATION STILL PRIMITIVE, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 15 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight the present civilisation is still primitive and at the level of the Stone Age because strength and ability are gauged by the ability to kill more people.

The prime minister said some people felt this way because now if a country could kill more people than another country, it was regarded as a super power.

"So we are still primitive and because of this, we need to bring about a change in our thinking. Instead, countries that are rich and powerful can save many people who are oppressed and poor with minimum costs," he said.

He was speaking in the "Khas Bersama Perdana Menteri" programme aired over RTM. In the programme, Dr Mahathir was interviewed on the effects of the Sept 11 attacks on the United States on Malaysia's economy, politics and security.

Dr Mahathir was asked for his views on Malaysia's preparations to face the world political scenario which is expected to change following the terrorist attacks on the US and the retaliatory airstrikes on Afghanistan.

There are views that the terrorist attacks and the bombings will undermine the US as a super power and that the next power will be China.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was a small nation and the use of force would not save it.

"We are aware that there are big powers in the world. If they want to, they can invade Malaysia," he said.

He said the world should realise that force could be used by not only the super powers but also the small powers.

"We should assess the success of a country not based on its ability in the military field but on its ability to develop and not undermine the development of other countries," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that although Malaysia had achieved a lot and this fact was acknowledged by many foreigners, there were some people in Malaysia who refused to accept the truth because of their own political agenda.

"This is very sad because if we work together we can become more developed than what we already are.

"For us, our struggle is to develop our country until we become a developed nation, This is a jihad because when we become a developed nation there'll be less pressure on us because they will acknowledge our capability," he said.

The prime minister said this was better than trying to go to war with one's enemies or to send one's citizens to a war that one was not sure of winning.

"If we become a developed country, not only can we win, but people will not pressure us," he added.

Asked whether he viewed the attacks on New York and the US retaliation against Afghanistan as a clash between the Islamic nations and the western system or the clash of civilisations, Dr Mahathir said he did not see it as an attack on Islam or Muslims.

"If they want to destroy all Muslims, it is quite easy for them... when they fire a nuclear bomb...hundreds of millions of Muslims will be wiped out. But they did not do so, they are only attacking Afghanistan," he said.

He said although Malaysia disagreed with the attacks on Afghanistan

because many innocent people would become victims, this was not a war against the Muslims.

Dr Mahathir that in facing the present situation, the Muslims must find a way to introduce Islam to the non-Muslims and to introduce Islam as a religion that promotes peace and not war.

Attention must be given to extremists Islamic factions which acted irresponsibly and beyond the bounds because their actions gave a bad picture of Islam and Muslims, he said.

"When we feel frustrated because of this, we will also act and further tarnish Islam's image. We must be rational, including in this matter we have to be rational. We don't want to go to war with the non-Muslims. We don't agree with terrorism even if it is committed by non-Muslims," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the action of terrorist groups in killing innocent people, including in the attacks on New York and Washington, in the name of jihad was not a jihad.

Jihad, he said, could be executed in various ways including developing the country so that it became so strong that no one could pressure it.

"Developing Islamic countries by mastering knowledge, that is also jihad. On the other hand, if we have to fight our enemies, we fight them but we do not kill people who have nothing to do with the oppression we are subjected to.

"What had been done was the killing of more than 6,000 people who had nothing to do with oppression. They included Malaysians. What wrong had we done that Malaysians should be killed? That was an act of terror and it did not reflect true jihad," he said.

The prime minister said jihad did not require killing and Muslims need not die in such a war to go to heaven.

"Non-Muslims may not understand this, but for Muslims this is important. We should remember the struggle of Prophet Muhammad, he did not die in a war and yet he found a place in heaven.

"This was also the case with several of his friends, they were not killed in war but still went to heaven. To think that only by going to war, indulging in acts of terror, murdering people and in turn getting ourselves killed is jihad and will make us martyrs is totally not in line with Islamic teachings," he said.

On the view that he was regarded as a person who did not support jihad, had arrested the Kelantan menteri besar's son, Nik Adli Nik Aziz, who had once gone on a jihad in Afghanistan, he said the government did not take action against Nik Adli when he was on a jihad in that country.

"But he returned with the intention of toppling the government by force. That was why he was placed under detention, because his action could weaken Malaysia due to disunity and riots," he said.

The government would not allow Malaysia to become weak just because of some irresponsible people who ostensibly wanted to use violence to overthrow the government because they were disappointed with the struggle through democracy," he said.

-- BERNAMA

AFY AHH JK