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Mahathir-threat (With Pix)

IMPORTANT TO RECOGNISE EARLY SIGNS OF THREAT, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

PUTRAJAYA, Dec 14 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said it is important to recognise early signs of threat either from inside or outside the country.

Citing Malaysia as an example, the Prime Minister said the government's actions against any sign of threat had compelled some people to accuse the government of being unduly nervous.

He was fielding a question from Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Sudan Mohamed Adam Ismail during a dialogue with representatives from the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) at Wisma Putra, here today.

"Even if we are accused of being a little bit harsh, we have to take actions...and because of that the government had managed the country well through difficult times," he said.

He said it was not easy to manage a country with a population of multi races and religions.

"If there are signs of people about to breach the law, the government must move in," he said.

Dr Mahathir said those who had accused Malaysia of being undemocratic for having the Internal Security Act (ISA) were now applying similar laws to counter possible threat.

"Even on a much more severe scale, when it does not happen to you, you could be more liberal but when it happens to your own country, being liberal is not so easy," he said.

He said OIC members would be able to recognise a threat if they gave enough focus in dealing with the issue.

To a question from Indonesian Ambassador Drs Hadi A. Wayarabi on how Muslim countries could overcome the problem of disunity, Dr Mahathir said the one should uphold the basic teachings of brotherhood.

"But yet we see some quarters, after talking about Islam brotherhood, didn't seem to do things like brothers at all. They are throwing around all kinds of accusations and bringing down their own government," he said.

Meanwhile, Afghanistan Charge d'Affairs Abdul Sattar Murad said the Muslim community was divided because some groups who claimed to be better Muslims tried to topple the government and teach other Muslims to be better Muslims.

Replying to Abdul Sattar's remarks, the Prime Minister said that those who wanted to see Muslim countries progressed should have sufficient knowledge on religion to rebut the interpretations, statements and fatwas from so called ulamas who have studied the religion.

"If we cannot rebut that on the basis of the correct teachings of Islam, then we will lose ground and support and cannot carry out what we want to do...Here, in Malaysia, we believe what we are doing are fully in accord with the true teachings of Islam...We keep on emphasising on this," he said.

Egyptian Ambassador to Malaysia Ossama El Ashiry had proposed that Malaysia played a significant role on the issue of including other knowledge in the study of religion, as well as other issues.

To this, Dr Mahathir said that efforts must be made to explain to them that Islam also encourage Muslims to acquire knowledge in other subjects as well.

To a question by Saudi Arabian Ambassador to Malaysia Hamed Mohammed

Ali Yahya, Dr Mahathir said that if there were going to be dialogues among Muslims, it should not be confined to ulamas alone.

He said everybody should be involved and that they must have the capability to discuss and argue as there was the tendency whereby when the ulamas said something, it would always be a pronouncement and that everybody would keep quiet.

"They don't question it because they don't know," he said.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar acted as the chairperson during the dialogue which was followed by the breaking of the fast and terawih prayers.

-- BERNAMA

SHS NZ ABG