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Mahathir-Islam

MALAYSIA CAN BECOME THE STRONGEST ISLAMIC NATION, SAYS PM

PUTRAJAYA, Nov 11 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is confident that Malaysia can become the strongest Islamic nation if Muslims in the country were to uphold the true teachings of Islam.

As such, he said, Muslims in Malaysia should acquire knowledge essential for the development of Muslims here and elsewhere so that Muslims would no longer be undermined.

Speaking during a dialogue attended by some 2,000 religious teachers from throughout the country here, the Prime Minister said that at present, Muslims were so weak that they were unable to protect themselves.

"With greater efforts, Inshaallah (God willing) we should be able to build a truly strong Islamic nation. It is never our intention to become the world's powerful but it is vital that we have certain strength to protect the Muslims," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that such strength could be developed if Muslims were steadfast in upholding the true teachings of Islam.

The Prime Minister said that Muslims should also place emphasis on moral values to curb incidents like a son setting his father on fire or a father raping his own daughter, frequently reported in the newspapers.

"What has happened to the morals of Muslims that a father could rape his own child. And this does not happen once or twice...we read of only a few (cases) in the newspapers.

"Actually, it happens quite often, because in our community moral values no longer exist. Instead, hatred has been constantly instilled against this and that person, especially over politics," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that because of the focus on politics, the true teachings of Islam had been neglected and this was happening among Muslims in the country.

"It's very embarrassing to see Muslims being dragged to court to face such charges," he said.

Dr Mahathir hoped that religious teachers entrusted with the responsibility to impart the true teachings of Islam would realise this heavy responsibility and cast aside other interests to concentrate on disseminating Islamic knowledge.

He said that in this way, a Muslim community with honour and principles, successful in their endeavours and capable of resisting their enemies could be developed.

Dr Mahathir also called on religious teachers to provide children with the true teachings of Islam because at that young age, they could readily absorb knowledge.

As such, he said, the role of teachers in the character development of children was crucial, to set a foundation on which to chart their life in future.

Referring to the situation of Muslims in the world at present, he said that they were intimidated, oppressed and attacked because they were weak and incapable of defending themselves.

He said that their weaknesses stemmed from the misinterpretation of Islamic teachings which were then disseminated.

Emphasis was placed on only one aspect of Islamic knowledge, namely the rituals, while other aspects were neglected.

Dr Mahathir said that as a result, many Islamic countries were incapable of self-administration, war would frequently erupt, attempts were

made to topple the government and as such, peace would not prevail and their countries could not be developed.

It was vastly different from the era of Islamic civilization some 1,000 years ago when Muslims were in power with huge empires, he said.

The Muslims, he said, had mastered various knowledge and others did not dare pose any threat to the Muslims.

Dr Mahathir said that now, when Muslims in Afghanistan and Palestine were killed, Muslims in other countries were helpless even though there exist rich Islamic countries like Saudi Arabia.

"Muslims are only good in staging demonstrations and protests but these are ignored by the parties concerned.

"The total number of Muslims is 1 billion but our power is not that of a people of 1 billion," he said.

He said: "Muslims are weak not because of other people. Muslims themselves are to be blamed for their own weaknesses and we are weak not because of the religion because if we were to heed Islamic teachings, we will remain Muslims who are progressive and successful.

"But because there are other interests, there are those who make wrong interpretations...and it is because of these misinterpretations that we now see Muslims who are weak and helpless to assist other Muslims who are suffering," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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