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PM: Muslims should be grateful for blessings

Abdul Razak Ahmad

LANGKAWI, Thurs. - Societies that are thankful for the blessings they receive will remain calm, while those that are not will not have peace, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia's Muslims should be grateful because while Muslims in strife-torn areas like Palestine and Afghanistan were facing much hardship, the country's Muslims could conduct their religious obligations in peace and comfort.

"In fact, we will only realise all our blessings when they are taken from us," he said when attending a breaking of fast ceremony at the Kedah Regional Development Authority (Keda) village at Wang Tok Rendong, here.

Dr Mahathir said while Muslims in war-torn countries like Afghanistan realise the importance of peace, Malaysia's Muslims, whom he said could be described as not having experienced any major disasters, do not realise their blessings.

"On the other hand, we keep thinking of what more we want and what is not enough, and when we don't get these things we feel sad or angry."

Dr Mahathir cited an example of how he was asked by journalists in Kuala Lumpur earlier in the day about the Cabinet's decision to raise toll charges for the North-South highway by 10 per cent. (SEE PAGE 4)

"There is such anger towards the 10 per cent hike, which is only slightly more than one sen per kilometre, but yet this is said to be unfair and oppressive," he said.

The Prime Minister added that such objection was despite the fact that the Government had only tabled the 2001 Budget, which provided much benefits for the people.

"I am not trying to purposely bring up the subject, but when our society does not know how to be thankful, it is a sign that we will receive many misfortunes," he said.

Citing Afghanistan, Dr Mahathir said some claimed that the country was the most pure Islamic nation when the Taliban regime in fact oppressed women and liked to wage war with rival Muslim groups.

"The view that Afghanistan is a pure Islamic country is not true whatsoever. We do not want to say that the current attack which they are facing is God's retribution, but the fact is that the Afghan people are suffering."

As such, the Prime Minister said Malaysia's Muslims should learn lessons from the conflict.

"Such is the fate of so many Muslims in the world today, but we are fortunate and so we should be thankful for all the blessings which God has given us," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who was in Langkawi for a working visit today, departed for Kuala Lumpur tonight.

He earlier made inspections and visits to several completed and on-going projects in the island.