

25 MAR 2001
Mahathir-Unity
UNITE UNDER ISLAM, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, March 25 (Bernama) -- Muslims in Malaysia have to set aside political differences and unite under Islam to consolidate the religion and national advancement, said the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

In a message to mark Maal Hijrah 1422, the Muslim new year tomorrow, he also reminded Muslims against being hostile to non-Muslims who do not wish to be their enemy.

Dr Mahathir said divergent political beliefs should not be a cause of Muslim disunity.

"Although we have various political parties whose members are Muslim, from the experience of Islam, there should not be any split," he said.

The celebration for this year's Maal Hijrah carries the theme "Perpaduan Pemangkin Pembangunan Ummah" (Unity, the catalyst for Ummah's development).

Dr Mahathir said Muslims should be able to perform their religious obligations together and when faced with challenges, they should set aside political or social differences and instead close ranks to defend Islam.

The prime minister noted that of late, especially as an aftermath of the 1999 general election, domestic development tend to move towards divisive tendencies.

"Unity among the people is undermined by all sorts of pressures and extreme demands by certain groups," he said.

Even unity among Muslims was not spared by the divisive effects of the misuse of religion, he said.

"As we celebrate this Maal Hijrah, let us renew our determination to improve and change ourselves towards attaining greater progress, success and most importantly, greater unity among us.

"God willing, with solid unity we can build and develop the nation further and be a country to be reckoned with by our enemies," he said.

Being divided would only imperil Malaysians, he said, citing economic and social destruction as well as anarchy in countries wrecked by senseless killings among their people ignited by religious and racial conflicts.

The prime minister said the lack of unity has led to Muslim nations, like Palestine, to suffer unending victimisation by their enemies ever since the Second World War.

"The root cause is the lack of unity and strength among the ummah as well as Muslim nations to come to their rescue.

"Several Islamic nations live by themselves and are helpless to help fellow Muslims elsewhere as they themselves have to grapple with their own problems arising from their divided and bickering people," he said.

Dr Mahathir said by taking the law into their own hands Muslims not only were doing a disservice to Islam itself but also thwarting the progress of Muslim nations as well as reverting to paganism.

Any group, acting out of fanaticism and without any regard for the good or evil of its action, was actually being paganish whereas Islam requires its followers to move towards goodness.

"Today's Muslims are weak and backwards in every way. If we really understand the meaning of hijrah, we should get ourselves out of such situation.

"For this, we need to discard misconceptions and cultures that inhibit us from making a hijrah to improve our lot. There is no point in us

celebrating a historic event in Islam if we do not learn lessons from it," he said.

The prime minister said the Prophet Muhammad radically changed his life by leaving his home to propagate Islam through the hijrah that led to the establishment of a strong Muslim government in Medina.

The city subsequently became the centre for the spread of Islam to the entire Arabian peninsula and all over the world, he said.

"The question now is whether we are willing to make the hijrah and leave behind us our ignorance that causes our weakness and embrace the true teachings of Islam that brought about immense success to the Prophet Muhammad?" Dr Mahathir added.

-- BERNAMA

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