

THE RIGHT WAY

PM: The struggle for Muslims in Malaysia is to preserve peace

STAR 6 DEC 2002

KUALA LUMPUR: People resorting to terrorism to gain power in Malaysia purportedly to set up an Islamic state are in fact a confused lot who do not understand the meaning of Islamic nationhood, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

"These people envisage an Islamic state from the aspect of clothing, particularly women's clothing, and the isolation of women to reduce the vicious lust of men. That Islam exhorts men to fight their own lust is ignored.

"Because they do not want to give in to temptation, women are not even allowed to attend school, seek knowledge or work," Dr Mahathir said in his Hari Raya Aidilfitri message over radio and television.

He said it would be most unfortunate if there were Malaysians interested in terrorism not to fight the enemies of Islam but to create chaos and seize power in their own country which was being administered by people of their own race and religion.

"Disappointed with democracy and elections to gain power and set up a government, these people have gone to Pakistan and Afghanistan purportedly to learn Islam, but in fact they went to learn how to make bombs and rob banks, commit murder and terrorism in preparation to seize power in this country," he said.

"What is the happiness of the people of Afghanistan, which is being held in such a high esteem by these groups, a people who suffered under the Taliban administration which was easily knocked down by the western powers, leaving the country a pauper and under the dictates of others?"

"Is this the type of Islamic state they wish to establish in Malaysia?" he asked, adding that the situation in Afghanistan was not the same as in Malaysia where people of different religions and races were not oppressed or prevented from practising their religions.

Dr Mahathir said that if indeed these terrorists wished to fight to uphold Islam, there were many places to go to where Muslims were being oppressed, humiliated and killed daily.

"Go there and fight. The struggle in Malaysia is to preserve peace and enrich the country in all fields so that we can defend ourselves and confound our enemies as required in Islam," the Prime Minister said.

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Repent and appreciate blessings, says Dr M

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He said people who tried to create chaos through terrorism were not only betraying their own country but also were traitors to Islam which urged them to save other Muslims.

People, either in detention or overseas, who aspired to use terrorism should repent and appreciate the blessings in this country, he said.

"I urge them to repent. Let us together enrich and bring even more progress to our nation, Malaysia. Let us increase our resilience so that we will no longer be colonised by foreign powers."

He said because of the activities of extremists, Malaysia was now being accused of being a centre for terrorists and this had adversely affected the country.

"If these terrorists are not checked, Malaysia will suffer the same fate as other countries which are being indiscriminately oppressed and are under great pressure."

On the economy, Dr Mahathir, who is also Finance Minister, said the 5.6% growth in the third quarter was the result of the untiring efforts of the Government to develop the country.

He said there were foreign attempts to cast doubts about Malaysia's stability, but the Government was able to stifle these attempts.

"All groups should ensure that nothing will happen that can affect the country's potential for even greater progress," he said.