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Abdullah-Islam

ABDULLAH SADDENED THAT MUSLIMS HAVE HIJACKED ISLAM

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 19 (Bernama) -- Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said that he is saddened that some Muslims have hijacked Islam to commit unIslamic and destructive actions whereas they should be projecting Islam as a progressive religion.

Abdullah said that Muslims do not subscribe, support, tolerate and even compromise with terrorists whether because of their ideology, religion or race.

"So, whether it is ethnic based, whether it is religion based, whether it is ideology based, we reject all forms of terrorism, all forms of extremism, not just those limited to Muslims or Islam," he said in an interview with four Asean journalists on the "In Conversation" programme aired over TV3 tonight.

Abdullah, who is also Home Minister, was asked on the recent events related to Islamic terrorism or extremism and the opposition party PAS' allegation that the Malaysian government is not Islamic enough.

The deputy prime minister said that the people must be warned about groups which preach any forms of extremism or unIslamic agenda, trying to bring about changes by resorting to unlawful means and against the constitution.

He said that the government would take stern action against them including resorting to preventive legislation, the Internal Security Act (ISA).

Dismissing PAS' allegation that the Malaysian government is very secular, he said that the government has given a role to Islam in the country's development, which was something that a secular government would not do.

"We have been successful in portraying the image of Islam because Muslims in Malaysia are willing to share power...we want peace and stability for this country.

"We want a progressive Islam, we want to enjoy the fruits of development and at the same time we have always been showing a lot of tolerance, and we respect and recognise the rights of other Malaysians who want to practise their own religion," he said.

Abdullah, named as Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's successor, said that he would maintain the role of Islam in Malaysia and hoped that the Muslim ummah would be able to acquire a new image of being progressive, modern and yet Islamic, moderate, always respectful and willing to cooperate with all the rest of the non-Muslim Malaysians.

On PAS' challenge in the next general election, Abdullah said that he would view the biggest opposition party seriously and would not take it for granted.

He said that PAS was trying to promote Islam and doing its best to gain support even by exploiting the people through the teaching of Islam.

"Islam has a very strong influence on the Malays. Any tendency towards exploiting of Islam, that can create them to be extreme in their ways and demands, that can also spell a lot of problems for the multiracial country like Malaysia and I will certainly view PAS as a very serious opposition to Umno, to Barisan Nasional," he said.

To a question, Abdullah said that communalism could be a threat to national unity and cause instability, which was very dangerous to the multiracial community.

"We have to ensure that Islam will not be allowed to be the divisive factor and Islam must not be allowed to be threatened by any tendency towards extremism and be hijacked by any terrorists or extremists. We have to deal with them very firmly," he said.

On the ISA that has been alleged to be against human rights, the deputy prime minister said that human rights do not extend to doing things that could cause problems to the people and were against the law.

"We must uphold the law, the constitution...it is something that we share and it is the law that provides the perimeters that govern our action and provide us the guide," he said.

To a question on bilateral relations between the United States and Malaysia, Abdullah said that although the two countries have differences when it comes to politics, they remain friends and their bilateral relations remain strong.

On the country's agreement to host the Regional Centre For Counter Terrorism as suggested by the US, he said that the choice of Malaysia by the US to host the centre was because Malaysia has very long experience of fighting communist terrorism.

Echoing Dr Mahathir's statement that in fighting terrorism there was a vital need to examine the root causes, Abdullah said that it has to be handled carefully as unfairness or irrational actions could cause further injustices.

"If you handle it by profiling Islam, then all Muslims all over the world will be angry including the moderate Muslims. It has nothing to do with poverty as the Muslims have been poor for a long time. If it is because of poverty, the Muslims could have retaliated for scores of years already...there must be some other reasons," he said.

Apart from Islam and terrorism, Abdullah also fielded a variety of questions including on the United Nations and the Security Council, the Asean+3 and globalisation.

He said that Malaysia hoped that the UN could play its role in ensuring that the member countries, especially the superpower and other "smaller nations", would follow and abide by its resolutions.

On the restructuring of the UN Security Council, he said that Malaysia has been advocating this but it seems to be the most difficult thing to achieve.

"It might help in many ways if we can make it more democratic, in a sense that we must learn and bow to the wishes of the majority," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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