

23 APR 2002

Ikim-Mahathir

DR MAHATHIR'S VIEWS ON ISLAM ALWAYS CONSISTENT

MELAKA, April 23 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had always voiced his views on Islam and the issues facing the community from the start of his political career and his views have been consistent, Chairman of the National Fatwa Committee, Datuk Dr Ismail Ibrahim said today.

He said at the national and international levels, the Prime Minister had frequently voiced his concern over elements that created disunity among Muslims, and their lagging behind in knowledge, economy, and their declining morals among others.

Dr Mahathir had also expressed concern over the plight of wealthy Islamic nations which had abundant resources such as oil but could not utilise their wealth effectively to strengthen unity and global performance of the Muslim community, he said when presenting a paper on "Thoughts on Islam" at the Colloquium on Dr Mahathir Mohamad's Thoughts held here.

He said for example the formation of the Malaysian Institute of Islamic Understanding (IKIM) in 1991 was the Prime Minister's idea aimed at promoting the global and universal agenda of Islamic understanding for both Muslims and non-Muslims.

Dr Mahathir, he said viewed Islam as a comprehensive system for the progress of the Muslims in various fields of knowledge, science and technology, economy, politics, social and others, unlike some Muslim groups that viewed Islam only as a ritual affecting a small part of their lives.

Dr Ismail said the recognition by international bodies towards Dr Mahathir's views was apparent at global forums such as the United Nations, the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) and the Group of Eight Muslim Developing Countries meeting where the Prime Minister expressed consistent views on the Muslim world.

Meanwhile during a media briefing Dr Ismail called on Islamic scholars involved in politics to be cautious when issuing any statements to avoid being influenced by personal interest and confusing the community.

He said these scholars should be responsible in disseminating religious knowledge and not use religion for their own political ends.

"We observe now a trend among the people to seek knowledge from political Islamic scholars, as such these scholars should be responsible in disseminating knowledge," he said.

He said if the Islamic scholars issued political statements that confused the community, it would induce the people to become fanatical supporters whilst in reality Islam encouraged moderation in all actions.

Dr Ismail, who is former IKIM Director-General also called for more intellectual forums to enhance Islamic knowledge among the younger generation to avoid them from being influenced by political statements.

He also voiced concern that political elements had seeped into the education system, at preschool, secondary school and tertiary levels.

"Educational institutions should not be influenced by politics but should be developed based on knowledge and intellect," he said.

-- BERNAMA

SBS RON ANA