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Mahathir-Friday

DR M REGRETS SCRAMBLE TO BE IMAM, KHATIB WHEN PERFORMING FRIDAY PRAYERS

KUALA TERENGGANU, Aug 16 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad regretted the incident of PAS supporters scrambling to be the imam and khatib while he was performing Friday prayers at the Losong Haji Mat Shafie Mosque here today.

Imam is the person who leads the Friday prayer while khatib delivers the sermon.

He said such incidents should not happen among Muslims in this country, especially in mosques, which is a place of worship for Muslims.

"I'm grateful to God for being able to perform Friday prayers at Losong Mosque. On hearing that I'm going to pray there, PAS supporters wanted to deliver the sermon to condemn the visitor to the mosque," he said.

Dr Mahathir related the incident when speaking at the handing over of keys and offer letters to recipients of the Terengganu fishermen families' housing project at Kampung Tok Jembal, here.

Dr Mahathir and State Umno leaders performed Friday prayers at the Losong Haji Mat Shafie Mosque here after the opening of the Terengganu Barisan Nasional (BN) Convention and leader-with-the-people gathering in Marang, near here.

The incident was caused by a man believed to be a PAS supporter, who was aided by several men, demanded to be the khatib to deliver the Friday sermon at the mosque in place of the mosque's regular khatib.

However, the matter was resolved amicably with the regular khatib delivering the sermon while the man became the imam to lead the prayers.

Dr Mahathir, in relating the incident to the audience, said when the man did not succeed in being the khatib, he demanded to be the imam.

"Unable to be the khatib and unsuccessful to deliver the sermon, he insisted to be the imam but we Umno people accepted him, we didn't reject a PAS imam.

"Since he is the imam, we prayed behind the imam because that is the teaching of our religion," he said.

He said the magnanimity of Umno members to accept a imam from among PAS members was different from that of the followers of the opposition party, who would go to the extent of isolating Muslims, and refused to accept the imam appointed by the government.

Dr Mahathir said a mosque is a place for Muslims to gather and forge friendship among each other and not a place to quarrel among ourselves.

"I want to ask PAS where did they learn that mosque is a place to fight? But this is what PAS is doing with their two imams and their attempt today to grab the place to be the khatib to deliver the sermon while the khatib is already there," he said.

He said the isolationism attitude and praying behind their respective imams were not the teachings of Islam but that of PAS as one way to split the Muslims.

Asked to elaborate further on the incident at the media conference after the function at Kampung Tok Jembal, Dr Mahathir said the imam assigned for the Friday prayers was already there and as such, the incident should not have happened.

"It's not nice to jostle. The man (who wanted to be the khatib and later the imam) always prays at the mosque, why suddenly today he wants to be the imam?

"This, I don't understand, why scramble (to be the imam or khatib), we

are Muslims, we cannot behave like that," he added.

-- BERNAMA

MRA SN RAR MAI TS