

19 SEP 2002

Mahathir-Islam

RISE TO DEFEND MUSLIMS' INTEGRITY, DR M URGES MUSLIMS

KEPALA BATAS, Sept 19 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight asked Muslims to rise to defend their integrity that has been tarnished after being labelled as the perpetrators of all the incidents that have worsened the situation in the world today.

The prime minister said it must be done by steadfastly holding to the principle that Islam does not advocate enmity and violence.

Islam's rejection of all elements of animosity and violence must be seen in the way of life of Muslims, he said when opening the 45th national-level Al-Quran reciting competition, here.

The text of his speech was read out by his deputy Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Dr Mahathir said: "Our actions must show to the world that Islam is a dignified religion. Muslims must act on this basis although they are facing a very challenging crisis."

He said violence and backwardness have become very synonymous with Islam and Muslims and Islam's enemies have moulded the thinking of the world community that Islam was a religion that perpetrated violence.

"Various incidents and facts related to violence were linked to Muslims," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Islam and Muslims were accused of all sorts of allegations that have diminished the beauty of this holy religion.

He said it was the responsibility of Muslims to rectify the situation and display all the beauty and truths of the religion in the daily lives of Muslims.

"Although the scenario in the lives of Muslims today was as though denying the beauty of Islamic values and hidden by the attitude of Muslims, we must be determined to correct them so that Muslims will always be looked up upon by non-Muslims," he said.

He said if Muslims themselves were unclear about the true teachings of Islam and deviate due to other interests and were not serious in practising Islamic principles, "Islam will be beautiful only in name and not in quality."

Dr Mahathir said the conflict faced by Muslims today like deviations in Islamic teachings by certain groups, if not curbed would become the main obstacle to the excellence of Muslims today.

He said the beauty of Islam can be seen in the faith, principles and moral.

If Muslims held firmly to the faith and principles of Islam, it would lead to the creation of Muslims with commendable qualities and character as enshrined in the Al-Quran, he said.

"The world today is seeing Muslims at loggerheads with one another due to differences in opinion or understanding of the Islamic teaching.

"We see the misunderstanding among Muslims before and now is due to the abuse of Islam for other interests," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Islamic teachings were distorted by those claiming to be Islamic leaders or ulama.

The deviations had reached a serious level to the extent of ridiculing or insulting Muslims, he said.

"I fact, Allah also is insulted by this group which have clearly deviated. This is indeed prohibited by Islam.

"This serious negative development is worrying us as Muslims," he said.

Dr Mahathir said these things happened because Muslims do not have a deep knowledge of true Islamic teachings and its interpretation was not based on paradigm, policy, philosophy, knowledge and overall Islamic values.

Dr Mahathir said there were Muslims who interpreted Quranic verses to suit their own interests, contrary to the real teaching.

The interpretation that "Allah is a gangster" was an example of the clear deviations in Islam due to lack of emphasis to Islamic faith and principles, he added.

Two qari -- Haji Abdul Rashid Abdul Rahman (Melaka) and Abdul Aziz Mohamad (Kelantan) and qariah Che Ah Jamaluddin (Kedah) -- displayed their skills in reciting the quran tonight.

The competition will go on till Monday.

-- BERNAMA

AHM TS