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MALAYSIA PRACTICES PROGRESSIVE ISLAM

By: Salmy Hashim

WASHINGTON Sept 17 (Bernama) -- Malaysia promotes a progressive Islam that is compatible with modernity and that coexists in peace and harmony with other civilisations, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said here Monday.

"In Malaysia, Muslims live true to the teachings of Islam where they participate fully in rapid economic development, encourage their children to excel in modern sciences and embrace the new economy," he said at a dinner hosted by the Heritage Foundation at a private club, here.

The Heritage is a local think tank that had hosted a luncheon and dinners for Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak who were in Washington recently. The private dinner for top members of think tanks, academia, and the State Department, was also made possible by the Malaysia-US Exchange Council.

Abdullah told the audience: "Islam does not teach us to attack innocent civilians; Islam does not teach us to attack those of other faiths; Islam does not teach us live in poverty; and Islam does not teach us to reject democracy and progress. Muslims who think in such a manner are a travesty to Islam."

Malaysia today faced a threat from religious extremists who sought to replace Malaysia's moderate and democratic Islamic governance with their skewed interpretation of a theocratic state, he said.

"Again, this is not a battle for the faint of heart, and one we must fight on a number of levels -- from capturing or containing those who threaten our security, to maintaining the principles of democracy and good governance," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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