

17 SEP 2002

Mahathir-Opposition

OPPOSITION MISINTERPRET ISLAM TO GAIN INFLUENCE, SAYS MAHATHIR

SHAH ALAM, Sept 17 (Bernama) -- The opposition parties misinterpret Islam to gain influence because they know that they will not get support from preaching the true Islamic teachings, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"They will not win support if it is based on the true teachings. So they start to misinterpret the religion to influence the people, especially those who may not be so well-versed in the true Islamic teachings," the prime minister said.

He was responding to questions at a dialogue after opening a seminar on "Understanding Malaysia as an Islamic State", here.

He said Islam had never taught its followers to treat other Muslims as enemies but the opposition parties were doing it for their political ends.

He said that when Malaysia was ruled by the British, the Malays were not disunited and they upheld Islam according to the true teachings.

"The teachers taught Islam without political overtones but when we became a democratic country and believed that the electorate would choose the best people to represent them, this group emerges which sees an opportunity to get something for themselves," he said.

"And they have chosen to use Islam as an attraction to win places as elected representatives and so forth," he said.

He said the opposition knew that if they used Islam based on the true teachings they would not be able to split the Muslims and hence would not be able to win elections.

"The opposition parties have twisted Islam to such extent that bad things are given priority," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that if the Muslims followed the true teachings, they would become a strong, educated race capable of inventing weapons for war and defence.

"But unfortunately, when the Muslims wanted to develop an Islamic nation, along came such people with their profanities, verbal abuse, slander, all of which contradict the Islamic teachings, to prevent the Muslims from making progress.

"Because of this, there is no Islamic country that is developed in the world now," he said.

"If we return to the one and only Islamic teaching and hold true to the fundamental Islamic teaching, there'll be no disunity among us," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that it was the government's duty to explain to those who had been hoodwinked by the opposition so that they could return to the true path.

He said that when the westerners said that Malaysia was a moderate country, he explained to them that Malaysia was actually an Islamic country which followed fundamental Islamic teachings.

"By embracing fundamental Islamic teachings, we will definitely become a good race, a united race, an educated race, a race capable of defending Muslims in other countries," he added.

-- BERNAMA

RIZ SR AZH JK