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King: Jihad misinterpreted (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Syed Putra Jamalullail today said he was saddened by the actions of certain Muslims who wrongly interpreted the concept of jihad (holy war) and martyrdom to suit their cause.

Certain groups, the King said, were more interested in interpreting jihad within narrow confines.

"Utterances of jihad are often linked to elements of mere force, violence and bloodshed.

"The confusion has to be cleared so that the true concept of jihad will bring progress to the ummah and nation in a more meaningful way," Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin said at the opening of the first meeting of the fourth session of the 10th Parliament.

Among those present were Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Fauziah Tengku Abdul Rashid, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Speakers of both Houses, Cabinet ministers and MPs.

The session was telecast live over Radio Televisyen Malaysia.

The King said Malaysia enjoyed peace and tranquility. However, there still existed elements that could threaten national security.

"The emergence of religious extremist groups using violence to achieve their objectives is a new threat to the nation's security. Firm action is being taken to trace and eliminate such elements."

He called on the people to revert to the true religious teachings in order to achieve success and excellence in every aspect of life in this world and the hereafter.

"We wish to stress that Malaysia as an Islamic country does not in any way hinder the lives of the multiracial society and religious freedom in this country, as provided for in the Constitution.

"On the contrary, the people at large feel safe and free from any oppression in the name of religion, be it among Muslims, or those of differing faiths."

On development, Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin expressed confidence that efforts to develop the country would succeed because the Government continued to enjoy the undivided loyalty of the people.

"The people's loyalty is important to safeguard the country's sovereignty and preserve the peace we are enjoying."

The King also expressed satisfaction with the efforts and commitment of the Government in eradicating crime, corruption, abuse of power and illegal activities.

"We should be reminded that efforts in eradicating and fighting corruption are the responsibility of all parties and should not be the sole burden of the Government."

He said measures and approaches, especially legislation, prevention and administration, had and would, be taken to stamp out corruption.

"We hope all parties involved in the upholding of the rule of law will be more responsible in discharging their duties."

Touching on the role of women, Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin said the Government would ensure that they continued to progress in line with the development of a knowledge-based economy.

Efforts would be taken, he said, to ensure women, especially from rural areas, have access to information and communication technology.

"Attention will be given to women who face problems such as violence and sexual harassment.

"Service centres are being built throughout the nation to provide counselling and also to function as a one-stop information centre for women."

On the economy, the King said he was grateful the country had been successful in avoiding recession following the world economic slowdown.

He attributed this to swift action taken to stimulate economic growth through various efforts.

The King said these included the two stimulus packages worth RM7.3 billion.

For the public sector, the King said all programmes and projects introduced by the Government to stimulate the economy would not benefit the people if they were not implemented with speed and efficiency.

He said several procedures, regulations and guidelines relating to the implementation of development projects and payments had been updated.

"We take pride in the performance of the development expenditure for 2001, having achieved 99.6 per cent, the best achievement since 1996."
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