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Mahathir-Muslims

MANAGEMENT OF RACE RELATIONS IS MALAYSIA'S GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT, SAYS
DR MAHATHIR

PETALING JAYA, April 11 (Bernama) -- Malaysia's greatest achievement since its independence is in the management of race relations in the country, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"Here, I would like to say that racial harmony is achieved in Malaysia because of Islam and because the majority of the people here are Muslims," he said at the 30th Annual Williamsburg Conference at a leading hotel here, today.

Dr Mahathir said the statement might be a bit hard to swallow for many as Islam and the Muslims are commonly associated with an inability to get along with peoples of other religions or races or even with Muslim peoples of different sects.

"They are said to be irrational, recalcitrant and unable to govern and develop their countries and last but not least are given to violence and terrorism. Can the Muslims of Malaysia contribute to peace and harmony among peoples who are so racially and religiously incompatible?" he said.

He said the answer to this question is that they can if they follow the fundamentals of Islam and the true teachings of Islam.

If today, Islam and the Muslims seem incapable of living at peace with others and to achieve progress, it is not because of the teachings of Islam but because many have deviated from the teachings and have made use of the devotion of the Muslims to promote their own agenda, he said.

Dr Mahathir said that in Malaysia the majority of the Malay Muslims try to adhere to the true fundamentals of Islam and this fundamentalism is not about being extreme.

"The fundamental teachings of Islam emphasise the brotherhood of all Muslims, the acceptance that in the human community there will be those who reject Islam, who will worship in their own way, for whom there will be religions which differ from Islam," he said.

Islam, he said, does not advocate enmity towards non-Muslims except when they attack the Muslims and even then if they sue for peace, Muslims must be willing to entertain their overtures.

He said the majority Malay/Muslims in Malaysia prefer to adhere to the true and fundamental teachings of Islam rather than the interpretations made by Muslims with political agendas both in the past and present.

"That is why we can claim that Islam is the reason for peace and harmony in Malaysia. Islam is also the reason for Malaysia's rapid development," he said.

On another matter, the Prime Minister said, although Malaysia believed in human rights for all but in the exercise of individual rights, the rights of the majority must not be denied.

"We regard it as wrong for individuals and minorities to exercise their rights in a disruptive way. The exercise of human rights must be accompanied by responsibility towards the community, towards maintaining stability and peace and if anyone shows a lack of responsibility, then he must forfeit his rights," he said.

The Prime Minister also said that Malaysia does not apologise for its views and is against foreign value systems which cares only for forms but not at all for substance.

He said peace is a prerequisite for prosperity and maintaining this peace required sacrifices and the country is prepared to make the sacrifices because Malaysia does not believe in being beholden to ideology

to the point of destroying itself.

On globalisation, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia appears to be against globalisation not due to recalcitrance or just wanting to be difficult.

"We do believe we know the problems resulting from the current interpretation of globalisation and we think we have some ideas about how to make globalisation less damaging to the poor countries while still benefiting the rich countries," he said.

He said Malaysia wants a cautious approach to be taken when it comes to globalisation and that "we should not rush into borderlessness, deregulations and free capital flows without examining the many consequences of these vigorously promoted concepts of the rich and the famous."

He said Asia and Malaysia have a right to do things their own way as long as the majority of its people approve of the way.

"We will follow what is good from Europe and America but we must have the freedom to decide what we should copy. Those who believe in freedom, in human rights and in democracy must allow us to manage the balance between peace and prosperity that we have achieved on our own," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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