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Mahathir-Ulamas

RIFTS IN ISLAM CAUSED BY SO-CALLED ULAMAS, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, April 2 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that rifts in Islam are caused by so-called ulamas who wrongly interpret Islamic teachings and refuse to accept criticism.

He said that when such ulamas were criticised, these ulamas who were active in politics and power crazy would accuse their critics as being against the ulamas.

"Even though those criticising the so-called ulamas accord due recognition to other ulamas without (political) interest and ulamas who are notable and well-known in history, the so-called ulamas will still accuse those who reject them as against the ulamas, all the ulamas," he said in reply to Datuk Fadzil Noor (PAS-Pendang) in the Dewan Rakyat here.

Dr Mahathir said that ulamas with certain interest more often than not make interpretations of the religion to suit their interest.

Ulamas active in politics were also prepared to deliberately interpret the teachings of Islam for their own political interest and were quick to label Muslims as infidel, not based on the religion but on politics.

Dr Mahathir said that ulamas with political inclination, when criticised, would be angered and would accuse those criticising them as against the ulamas but they would, without hesitation, turn around to criticise other ulamas who do not share their point of view.

"Their action in dismissing other ulamas are not regarded by them as being against the ulamas, against Islam and of those who are infidels," he said.

He said that the government was actually trying to maintain the good name of the ulamas as they were people highly respected in society.

The prime minister also said that his speech at the World Economic Forum in New York was not against the ulamas as alleged by certain parties who even went to the extent of publishing a book to discredit him.

"But, it (the speech) was against the ulamas with certain interest in the history of Islam, ulamas who divide the Muslims to the extent they are in enmity and at war, the so-called ulamas who undermine other ulamas and indiscriminately accusing others as being against the ulamas and resorting to rhetoric for political mileage," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that he prays to God that Muslims be protected from these so-called ulamas.

To a supplementary question by Fadzil who wanted to know whether he got himself trapped by his speech in New York due to the actions by the West to divide the Muslims and by isolating Muslims from continuing to play a role in nation-building, Dr Mahathir said that his speech did not slight others especially ulamas.

In fact, he said, many people including leaders of Islamic nations lauded his speech.

"I've never been caught in a trap...in fact, Malaysia has been recognised by the world as a nation which is bold enough to point out the wrong committed by any party including the big powers," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that he would continue to issue statements including criticising those who had done wrong and stand up for the truth.

Dr Mahathir also said that ulamas in Umno were learned in the religion and express their views based on Islamic teachings.

Replying to Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar (BN-Batang Lupar) whether the

government would provide a definition as to who are ulamas, Dr Mahathir said that in the olden days ulamas were not identified by their clothes, qualifications or associations they belonged.

They were recognised as ulamas because of their knowledge and most of them were aged with wide experience unlike at present.

To a question by Datuk Mustafa Ali (PAS-Dungun) who wanted to know why the prime minister had stated that ulamas active in politics reject the various disciplines except religion, Dr Mahathir said it was because they had been saying that knowledge other than religion was secular whereas in Islamic history ulamas never rejected knowledge not related to religion.

They were experts in mathematics, astronomy and science, he added.

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