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Mahathir-Extremism

STATE OF EXTREMISM IN MALAYSIA GETTING WORSE, SAYS DR M

KUALA LUMPUR, July 27 (Bernama) -- Race-based extremism is getting worse among the younger generation in the country, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said in politics too, extremist parties were also seen to be gaining ground among the Malays, adding: "There is support for PAS which does not want to work with other communities, but of course they want the votes, that is a different matter. But there is no sign that they would work with other parties."

Dr Mahathir, who is also the Barisan Nasional (BN) chairman, said race-based extremism in the country was getting more and more serious compared to previously where people of different background could mix with each other.

"There is no doubt (about) that. My generation, for example, we mix very freely, we live together, play together and work together. But now the younger generation are not close together...Okay, you can work in separate schools but at least play together, have some interaction. Then we can develop closer interaction (among races)," he said.

He told reporters this after opening the 49th MCA annual general assembly at Wisma MCA here. The ceremony was also attended by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and all BN component party leaders.

He said all the different communities in the country also had their respective extremist groups and these extremists did not care about the sensitivities of other races.

"When they push their extremist ways, the other races will respond by becoming extreme and as a result, racial harmony in the country would be undermined, we would be confronting each other, there would be a lot of tension and what happened in 1969 can happen again," he said.

He said the government was trying to curb this form of extremism and one of the ways was to introduce Vision Schools, where national, Chinese and Tamil schools were housed in the same compound but the idea, although already implemented in some places, did not go down well with the Chinese community.

"If they do not want (to go to) the same school, at least get the schools closer to each other. Then you can play games together, attend the assembly together but you go back to your respective schools, there is no change in the school," he added.

The Umno president said there were some people who objected to even bringing schools close to each other.

He said Vision Schools or "Sekolah Wawasan" was a good idea because the original idea was that all Malaysians would go to the same national type school, but the fact was that they were not going to the national type schools but the Chinese and Tamil schools respectively.

"They have no chance to get together and this is very bad for the future. We all were brought up together (Datuk Seri Ling) Liong Sik, Pak Lah (Abdullah), all of us, my neighbours were Chinese and Indians. I had no problems.

"Even in university I stayed in the same room with a Chinese student. I did not become less Malay or less Muslim, nor did he become less Chinese just because we stayed in the same room," he added.

However, Dr Mahathir said the situation now was different where

students of different races were not willing to stay in the same room and in actual fact even at lecture halls the Malays stick to the Malays while the Chinese were with the Chinese.

"But later on when they leave the university and want to work and find that their bosses and co-workers are of other races, they can't adapt. We are not doing this for any one race but for the good of the nation," Dr Mahathir said.

The Prime Minister said the BN component parties did not have any problems when it came to racial unity which could be seen during component parties meetings and such.

"I come to a MCA meeting I get the same kind of support when I go for Umno meetings they even shout "Hidup Mahathir"...imagine that when I was appointed (as the PM) everybody said "My God what is going to happen" but now they say "My God he is going to step down" so things have changed now," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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