

PM: Muslims accept govt views on Islam

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KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday said the majority of Muslims in the country accept the government's views on Islam, and that this has prevented them from deviating from the true teachings of the religion.

"I follow the fundamentals of religion, and the fundamentals of the Muslim religion are actually very good; they advocate peace, they advocate friendship, brotherhood and tolerance of people. Those are the fundamentals," he said in an interview on BBC's programme *Talking Point*, hosted by Lyse Doucet.

Mahathir said for over

1,400 years, people have been interpreting the religion to suit their needs. They preach hatred and advocate war, which is actually deviating from the essence of Islam.

"We had the same phenomenon in Malaysia and we countered this by explaining the true fundamentals of Islam to the people. By large, Malaysian Muslims, they agree with our views," he said.

To a question about PAS's allegations that the government does not adhere to the fundamentals of Islam by refusing to implement syariah laws, Mahathir said PAS is not an Islamic party but a political party that uses

Islam for its own gains.

"That is just a political gimmick. They know very well that we have syariah laws that apply to Muslim families. But we cannot apply syariah laws throughout the country because 40% of our population are not Muslim."

Mahathir added that it will be unjust and unIslamic to implement syariah laws on non-Muslims in the country.

To another question, Mahathir said there is a need for Muslims around the world to go back to the basics of the religion.

He said wrong interpretations only divide the community and hinder economic and scientific development.

"A lot of people make different interpretations and people believe in these wrong interpretations. The result is that Islam appears to be an obstruction to progress."

Mahathir added that it will be difficult to unite the 1.3 billion Muslims in the world, just like how it is difficult to unite the more than 50 member nations of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC).

"But we feel we can perpetrate perhaps a number of them to unite and act effectively, despite the fact that there is no full unity," he said of Malaysia's task as chairman of the 10th OIC summit, to be held this week.