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Mahathir-Islam

MAJORITY OF M'SIAN MUSLIMS AGREE TO FOLLOW FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 12 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the majority of Muslims in Malaysia are in agreement with the government's view of following the fundamentals of Islam.

This, he said, had 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 Talking Point programme hosted by Lyse Doucet, to be aired on Astro's Channel 93 tonight.

Dr Mahathir said, however, for over 1,400 years people had been interpreting and reinterpreting the religion to suit their own purposes, such as preaching hatred among people and advocating war, which was actually deviating from the true teachings of Islam.

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

Responding to a question about PAS' allegations that the government does not adhere to the fundamentals of Islam by refusing to implement syariah laws, Dr Mahathir said that PAS was not an Islamic party but a political party which made use of Islam.

"That is just a political gimmick. They know very well that we have the syariah laws which apply to Muslim families. But we cannot apply syariah laws throughout the country simply because 40 per cent of our population are not Muslims," he said.

Dr Mahathir explained that to implement syariah laws on all would be unjust and an injustice and was not advocated by Islam.

"We explained this -- according to the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet -- why we advocate this. We think and we are convinced that we are Islamic and they are not Islamic even if they call themselves an Islamic party," said the Prime Minister.

Dr Mahathir also said what PAS had been preaching was hatred which resulted in several violent actions, whereas the true teachings of Islam, among others, was that all Muslims are brothers.

To another question, Dr Mahathir said there was a need for Muslims all over the world to go back to the true teachings of the religion and understand its fundamentals.

He said the wrong interpretations of the religion not only divided Muslims among themselves but also hinder the economic and scientific developments in the community.

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

Asked about the unification of Muslim countries, Dr Mahathir said it would be a difficult task to unite 1.3 billion Muslims, nor that Malaysia, as the chairman of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), could unite its more than 50 Muslim country members.

"But we feel that we can perpetrate perhaps a number of them to unite and also we can act effectively, despite the fact that there is no full unity. We are not too ambitious. We think that we should have a different

strategy which can give us better results. So that is what we hope to do at the OIC meeting," he said.

Malaysia is hosting the 10th OIC Summit in Putrajaya this week.

-- BERNAMA

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