

## **Corrupt people must be punished, says Mahathir**

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**From Leslean Arshad**

LONDON, Sept 25 (Bernama) -- Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Monday that corrupt people must be punished but he did not think that it has reached a stage in Malaysia where the corrupt should be sentenced to life imprisonment.

"They (corrupt individuals) might be jailed. How long they need to be jailed depends on the extent of the corruption, and I think different levels of corruption need different punishment. But we have not reached the stage of having to sentence people for life," he said.

Dr Mahathir was responding to a question of whether he supported the death penalty for corrupt leaders after he had delivered a lecture on 'The Challenge of Good Governance in the Muslim World' on Monday at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies.

Those found guilty of corruption by the courts in Malaysia would be sentenced to jail, he said, adding that in some countries they actually shoot to kill corrupt people but that it would not solve the problem.

In his lecture, which touched on Muslim nations and the democratic system, Dr Mahathir said Muslim countries adopting the democratic system needed to spend more time to understand the workings of democracy.

"If you don't understand that in a democracy the vote is powerful, then you cannot have a democratic system," he said, adding that in such Muslim countries, they were much more comfortable with the system of monarchy.

In some Muslim countries, the transition to the democratic system had brought disaster to

those countries, he said.

"Every time they try for a democratic system, there will be fighting among them and the countries can be almost destroyed," he said.

In a democratic system, he said, people chose the government and supported the government for a period of time.

However, in some Muslim countries, they could not wait for the term to be over and wanted to change immediately after the election, he said.

"(It's) time for them to respect the vote and set up a government which uses power for the betterment of the country and people," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was a Muslim country which adopted the democratic system, although only 60 per cent of its population was Muslim and the people were loyal to the Rulers.

The system somehow worked because the people in Malaysia seemed to find that while they had their Rulers they could also have a democratic system, he said.

"We (in Malaysia) don't like violence. We don't overthrow a government until the government changes by itself," he said, drawing laughter from the floor.

On his maiden visit to the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, in 1996, Dr Mahathir had delivered the memorable lecture on 'Islam, the Misunderstood Religion'.

The centre, since its founding in 1985, has invited many leading figures to speak on matters related to the Islamic world. At its new premises, the centre has a number of dedicated lecture spaces, including the Malaysia auditorium, to allow for further development of its programmes.

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