

Solve problems through consensus, PM tells students

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From AHMAD A. TALIB

BOSTON, Sun. — The younger generation of Malaysians has to ensure that the consensus approach towards solving problems, no matter how big or small, is maintained, Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday. *Overseas trip*

In a plural society like Malaysia, understanding each other's sensitivities is essential to maintaining and consolidating harmony.

Dr Mahathir gave this reminder to Malaysian students who attended a dialogue session with him at Boston University. He was accompanied by his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Ali and several officials.

Scores of Malaysian students were present to hear Dr Mahathir deliver his "lecture" on the role of the younger generation in a society that is fast changing and about to enter the 21st century.

He said: "You have a responsibility to yourself and to your parents. Of equal importance, you have a responsibility to your generation and the future citizens of Malaysia.

"Concentrate on your studies. Simultaneously, you have to

help us devise ways and means to improve ourselves, mindful always of the national interest."

Dr Mahathir told the students, some of whom had brought their children and babies along for photography session after the talk, that the present leaders will eventually make way for the younger set.

Therefore, it is imperative the younger generation develop their minds and perspective so as not to be narrow-minded and inclined towards extremism.

Malaysia has no need for extremists, he said, adding the country wants moderates who can rationalise national needs and objectives without having to resort to the streets to solve common problems.

We need to improve our tolerance of each other's peculiarities, develop racial harmony and devote our efforts towards national resilience based on consensus, he said.

The Prime Minister said the Barisan Nasional has the ready and proven *modus operandi* to maintain political stability.

He said: "In a multi-racial society, a small measure of dissatisfaction is inevitable. In a way

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this is good because this indicates that no single community gets everything that it wants.

"All races are demanding more, but we know that not all of them get everything they demand or request," he added.

He told the students the reality of the moment demands they contribute towards national stability because this is the foundation of the nation's future.

The present leaders will continue to work to make the economy stronger, but this task will be left to the students some of whom may find themselves in Government in the years to come.

Through prudent financial management and pragmatic policies, the Government has managed to bring about an economic recovery together with the rest of the world which was adversely affected by the slowdown over the last few years.

But there is still much to be done to bring back the national per capita to previous levels. The present per capita of about US\$1,200 (about M\$3,000) is still below the US\$2,000 (about M\$5,000) the country used to enjoy before the economic slowdown.

In this regard, everyone has to work towards better efficiency.

Dr Mahathir told the students to be wary of reports in the foreign media depicting a picture of gloom and tension in the country.

He said there is no truth to some reports which claim the Government is unstable, weak and divided.

"There is no truth in these reports because the economy is picking up and in some sectors is performing better than in the good old days," Dr Mahathir said.

He advised the students to mix more with their counterparts from other countries because this can broaden their outlook and help develop their personalities.

"Let us not create our small kampungs abroad. Let us get to know our environment better and develop positive windows in our minds," he told the students.