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KUALA LUMPUR, April 13 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, more accustomed to answering queries from journalists, today found himself in the unique situation of being +interviewed+ by a group of children on what Malaysia in the year 2020 would be like for them.

The prime minister was completely at ease in the role of a father figure as he fielded the wide range of questions, including +tricky+ ones like on what his occupation would be 30 years from now.

+We wouldn't know. A prime minister may be a prime minister for two, three or five years. This is a matter which we cannot predict,+ he said during the 15-minute question-and-answer session with eight primary school students broadcast by Radio Televisyen Malaysia (RTM) over its +Kelab Kanak-Kanak Angkasapuri+ programme this morning.

The prime minister said he hoped that the government in the year 2020 would strive to fulfill the current vision he had for a developed and progressive nation so long as that vision remained unfulfilled.

He said education by that year would stress on discipline, responsibility and good moral values to ensure that children became useful citizens of a developed nation when they grew up. -- more

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+In the future, education will also be focused on skills needed by an industrialised nation and no longer on those which are needed by an agriculture-based country.

+So, for this, we have to know how to handle and train ourselves for jobs which are in line with the industrial development of our country,+ he said.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said Malaysia should not continue to be a developing nation forever with its people earning low wages and the country having less facilities than those in developed countries.

+We have a right to enjoy contentment and well-being in life like those in developed nations. This will not come to us if we do not all make an effort,+ he added.

He said measures being taken now were initial steps towards fulfilling the aims of the vision that by the year 2020 the people of the country would be on par with those of developed nations. -- more

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+In the year 2020, we hope that we are equal to developed nations in terms of progress, efficiency, earnings and capability. So there can be no one who will look upon Malaysians as weak and lacking when compared to developed countries,+ he said, adding that children too should be prepared towards achieving this aim.

To a question on whether cars of the future would look much like those portrayed in today's science-fiction cartoons, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said there was nothing that did not change with the times and man should always strive to better all that is around him.

+Cars are a convenience and we should think of ways to improve them maybe to stop them from having accidents and killing people daily particularly during festive seasons,+ he said.

On the level of education in the future, he said that the challenges at that time would require one to have skills in various fields compared to the past when it was sufficient to just know how to read and write.

On his advice to all children, the prime minister said an important point in development and well-being was the practice of good values by the community. -- more

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He said good values should be taught from small to ensure that future generations did not encounter problems like theft and corruption.

+If we believe in what is good and if we do good all the time then the community will become even better,+ he said.

After the question-and-answer session, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir was besieged by requests for autographs from the children after which he took the opportunity to wish children the nation over a +Selamat Hari Raya+. --
Bernama

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