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Mahathir-Institute

PETALING JAYA, Aug 12 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today inaugurated the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations to enhance the calibre of Malaysian diplomats abroad.

The institute will train prospective and serving officers to enable Malaysia to play a more effective role in the international arena.

He said diplomats needed to be skilled and have a deep knowledge of diplomacy and national policies and objectives in order to achieve success in foreign relations and to uphold the country's image abroad.

The inauguration was held in conjunction with a conference for heads of Malaysian delegations abroad at the National Institute of Public Administration (INTAN) in Jalan Ilmu here,

In his speech, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said there was no formal training in diplomacy in the past aside from the experience gained from serving as junior officers in Malaysian missions abroad.

Experience alone, however, was insufficient to enable a diplomat to be effective in his mission, he added.

+It would be better if there is a standard course which covers all fields of diplomacy, from the culture of diplomacy to the approaches, protocol, language and the art of negotiation,+ he said. -- more

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He said Malaysia, a small developing country, should understand how to use diplomacy more effectively than the big powers.

Certain attitudes and characteristics needed to be nurtured so that a suitable diplomatic personality could be created among Malaysian diplomats, he added.

He said: +Not only the tasks they are required to perform but also how to way to conduct themselves abroad and at receptions must also form part of the courses at the institute.

+This is because in diplomacy, the personality of the diplomat plays an important role in bringing success.+

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said diplomatic staff should possess a deep understanding of the country's policies for without knowledge that is learned and that which is imbued, they might not be able to carry out their tasks effectively.

In-depth knowledge of diplomacy and its uses to achieve success for the country's policies and foreign relations could not be taken lightly, he added.

+No matter how capable are the foreign officers, their knowledge needs to be up-dated at all times,+ he said.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir also said that inter-dependence among countries could not be avoided in the modern era and no country could isolate itself from others. -- more

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He added: +The era of isolationism is over. Each country must have relations at least with a neighbour if not with a country further away.

+And, the big powers in the world will not allow any country to isolate itself. Like it or not, every country must accept the friendship or enmity of the world powers.+

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir called on Malaysia's diplomats to monitor the changes in the nation's priorities from time to time.

Without renewing their knowledge of the country's current policies, it was not likely that they could serve effectively.

Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Chief Secretary to the Government, Tan Sri Ahmad Sarji Abdul Hamid, Wisma Putra Secretary-general, Datuk Ahmad Kamil Jaafar, the Institute's Director-General, Datuk A.S. Talalla and heads of foreign missions here attended the ceremony.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir held a closed-door dialogue with the heads of missions attending the conference following the ceremony. -- Bernama

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