

VISION 2020 is aspiration of people, says Dr M

By Nuraina Samad

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — The Vision 2020 aim of making Malaysia a developed country in 30 years is the aspiration of all Malaysians who want progress for the nation, the Prime Minister said tonight.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, however, clarified that he was voicing a general view based on his confidence that all Malaysians wanted progress and development.

"I believe everyone wants progress and wishes Malaysia to be a developed nation," he said during a special RTM interview, *Bersama Perdana Menteri*, by a panel comprising Rustam Sani of the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (Isis), Utusan Melayu group chief editor Zainuddin Maidin and Associate Professor Dr Ishak Shari of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia's Economic Faculty.

Dr Mahathir said: "Whether Vision 2020 is mine or that of the nation is left to interpretation. I am only voicing, in my opinion, a general view. I am only the voice for expressing this.

"I am confident that all Malaysians wish for progress and a progressive nation. But if those who lead the Government do not voice the people's aspirations, then it will not attract the attention of those involved in national development," he said.

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same as Tun Hussein's. This is a matter of style," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the machinery to achieve the objectives had already been set, adding that he was confident his successor would continue the work.

"I don't think that whoever takes over from me will change the (target year) from 2020 to, say, 3000 or from making the country progressive to one that is not. This is impossible.

"I am confident that all those in the Government now have a common objective."

On social conflicts that might arise as a result of industrialisation, Dr Mahathir said that while this could be true, proper planning ... could help reduce the gravity of these problems.

On the need for industrialisation, Dr Mahathir said this was being undertaken not because the country was influenced by the West but because it could generate income opportunities for the nation's growing population.

He said the agricultural sector alone could not fulfil the employment needs of the people.

Asked about one view that the vision for a progressive nation did not have Islamic elements, he said he could not accept that "to regress is Islamic and to progress is not".

"Progress is also the right of Muslims," he said, reflecting on the history of the Muslims and Islamic civilisation.

Dr Mahathir said to equate Islam with non-progressiveness was to demean and insult the religion.

"I cannot see that in Islam we are told to forever be retrogressive. There is no such thing in Islam. On the other hand, we are told to seek knowledge."

Dr Mahathir said Islam had shown that it can bring progress to a race as was evident during its early civilisation when the Arabs became advanced in medicine and administration.

Dr Mahathir also scoffed at claims that only certain people gained from privatisation of Government agencies and that it did not benefit the people.

He said the notion was that the "certain people" mentioned were the ones who benefited from the privatisation process.

"But, in order to transfer (operations from the Government to the private sector), somebody will have to take over. If it is not this person, it is that."

He said these allegations were voiced all the time because there would be those who were always suspicious of others.

Dr Mahathir, however, stressed that these private contractors may not succeed.

Asked to comment on fears that privatisation might bring about a situation in which people would not be as loyal to the Government as they are to the private sector, he said the risk was there but added that it would suffice if the people were loyal to the country.

"They will then support whoever is taking good care of the country. If the Government cares and runs the country well, loyalty will also be turned to the Government," he said.

On the reluctance of the people to adapt to change, such as the imposition of toll, Dr Mahathir said acceptance would come with time. He said that in countries where the payment of toll is normal, nobody argues anymore.

"But we are going through a process of change in Malaysia. Therefore we are faced with a problem of not wanting change because it is uncomfortable."

Dr Mahathir cited Japan where toll charges were high and were imposed on all highways.

He said the normal charge there was \$1 for every kilometre. In Japan, he added, the toll imposed at a bridge about the length of Penang Bridge was \$250 one way whereas two-way toll charge on Penang Bridge was only \$7.

He was asked to clarify statements by certain groups that Vision 2020 was not the vision of Malaysians but was that of his own.

On the significance of 1991 to make known Vision 2020, Dr Mahathir said the country had reached the end of the New Economic Policy and there was a need for a new plan.

He said the National Development Policy was formulated to attain the country's objectives within 10 years.

"If we make comparisons, 10 years is half the 20 years (of the NEP). We may achieve progress in 10 years but we need to determine what our objectives are for a longer period of time."

On whether there would be continuity in the national leadership to make Vision 2020 a success, Dr Mahathir said he did not foresee any problem.

He said all members of the Cabinet had agreed on and understood ways to ensure the success of Vision 2020 although each might have an individual style.

"Tunku Abdul Rahman's style was not the same as that of Tun Abdul Razak. Tun Abdul Razak's was different from Tun Hussein's. And my style is not the

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