

A good leader is a long-term planner with lots of ideas, says Dr Mahathir

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By Jeffrey Ramayah

PETALING JAYA, Tues. — A good leader should be one who is a long-term planner with lots of ideas for the development of the country and the people, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said if a person has limited ideas, the same as others, he or she could not be an effective leader.

"I believe that leaders should look far ahead and not look for immediate gains," he said in response to questions from undergraduates and academic staff of the International Islamic University.

The Prime Minister said leaders who looked for immediate gains tended to become corrupt.

As an example, Dr Mahathir said: "If you are thinking of the next election, you hand out money and you become popular. The receivers will ask for more and more and where will you get the money?"

He was responding to a series of questions during his visit to the university to mark its 10th anniversary celebrations.

The questions ranged from an appeal for an increase in scholarships to the qualities of a good leader and the possibility of setting

up an Islamic Common Market to act as a trade bloc.

Dr Mahathir said, for the time being any proposal to form an Islamic Common Market to serve as a trade bloc was totally impossible.

"This is because many Islamic countries sell oil and we cannot expect them to sell the oil among themselves.

"They have to sell in the international market."

To another question, Dr Mahathir stressed that the East Asian Economic Caucus is not a trade bloc.

He said the EAEC is a gathering of nations to discuss problems and to have a common stand when deal-

ing with other regions of the world.

He said Malaysia did not believe in trade blocs as this might destroy the economy of a country or region.

Dr Mahathir said the Islamic world must be realistic and accept the fact that they have to look to other countries to export their produce.

He said that Muslim countries must first be economically strong and must be self-dependent before they could think of forming a trade bloc.

Dr Mahathir said in order to acquire military might, a country must have vision and be economically strong.

He had his audience in stitches when he replied to a request for an increase in scholarships for those studying at the IIU.

One undergraduate said the RM2,400 allowance for two semesters was insufficient and urged Dr Mahathir to review the current amounts.

"When I first worked as a clerk, I earned RM30 monthly which I considered insufficient.

"After I qualified in medicine and became a houseman, I was paid a monthly salary of RM300. This was also not enough.

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Review of study aid if needed

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"When I became a medical officer, I earned RM750 and this too was not enough.

"Because it was not enough, I became a private practitioner and monthly earned RM2,400. This was also not enough.

"Now I have become a philosopher, especially when it comes to the earnings of others," he said.

To the applause of his audience, Dr Mahathir said the Government would look into the matter and if there was a need there would be a review of the scholarships.