

PM: Don't be misled that achievements came easy

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By Manan Osman

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — The younger generation should not be misled into thinking that the country's achievements were easily attained, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

He said Malaysia has moved away from being a domino, ready to fall to the communists, and turned itself into a dynamo, reflecting that the country has come a long way since the pre-war days.

"You were born free. You have entered your adulthood in a completely different world. You are inheriting a radically different present than did my generation.

"You will have to build a vastly different future, a future that is in many ways unimaginable today.

"You are a much luckier generation. But let no one mislead you. In the years and decades ahead, you will be equally challenged.

"You will be faced with challenges as daunting as we faced. You will need to respond with the same gumption, the same sincer-

ity, the same dedication," he said at the closing of the First International Malaysian Students Conference on Vision 2020 at the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS).

"You have to be all these because the challenges of success and sustaining our thrust forward to full modernity are as great as the past challenges of rising from our knees and giving meaning and pride to our freedom."

He said they should have no illusions as the challenges of Vision 2020 were awesome by any measure.

He said Malaysians must also ensure that they constantly improve their competitiveness and ability to roll with the punches, to take the economic thump on the chin and to bounce back, in better fighting shape.

But he said, "success and greater comfort would cause us to lower our guard and increase our girth".

Dr Mahathir also warned of an escalation of attack on Malaysians' moral fibre and fabric in the years ahead.

"We know this will happen because it has happened

to most of the developed countries, indeed to most civilisations in the past.

"In the end, the great nations undergo decay and decline, and fall from their pre-eminent position.

"This is due to their disregard for the ethical and moral values which built their society in the first instance. We cannot allow this to happen to us.

"Our achievements would be empty if we do. We must therefore consciously guard and nurture high moral values in order to sustain our achievements."

Dr Mahathir said over the next 26 years, the younger generation would have to adjust their priorities and refine the vision that the nation had taken to its heart at the end of its first generation as an independent people.

"But I have every confidence that the dreams that we hold dear today will remain your dreams and will withstand the test of time."

He said there was much to be done and accomplished in the 312 months to 2020.

"To achieve what must be achieved will require the

mobilisation of the entire Malaysian people."

He said the prospective plan called for a seven per cent annual growth over the span of 30 years.

The country, he said, grew by an average of 6.7 per cent in the 20 years between 1970 and 1990 and by more than eight per cent in the last five years.

He said they might think that an additional 0.3 per cent yearly growth was no big deal.

"But, believe me, it is because for some reason or other, economies with a big base tend to grow more slowly than those with a small one.

"Developed economies do not grow at the rate of developing economies, and so early growth must be high in order to achieve a good average."

But he pointed out that if growth in the early years was not high enough while those in the later years was too low, the average of seven per cent would not be achieved.

He said one per cent in the

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second decade of the 21st century would represent a much bigger sum in gross domestic product terms than one per cent now.

Dr Mahathir said prosperity was not meant for a few but for all Malaysians.

"We cannot be proud of our country even if many of our people are at the cutting edge of world civilisation, if others are left in the backwaters of progress.

"We must try our level best to move the entire nation forward."

He said Vision 2020 was not only an economic vision but also a social, psychological and cultural vision.

"We believe in establishing a fully caring and sharing society, one that is ferociously dynamic but not rapacious. We want a society with a human face and a big human heart."

About 100 students were specially picked from local and foreign universities to attend the four-day conference.

Dr Mahathir also held a 1½-hour closed-door dialogue session with the students which was chaired by ISIS director-general Datuk Dr Noordin Sopiee.