

Dr M: Use media to determine the good and bad

By Badrul Hisham

KOTA BARU, Thurs. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said it is vital for the people to be open-minded in order for them to be able to differentiate between good and evil.

He said there were those who refused to listen to anything to the extent of refusing to accept even the truth unless told by their leaders to do so.

"These people can become ignorant and be easily influenced. In the end, they will suffer for it," he said when launching the national-level *Kumpulan K3P* (Listener, Viewer and Reader Group), here, today.

He added that it was important for them to listen to the radio, watch television and read the newspapers to know about the various programmes carried out by the Government.

Dr Mahathir said those who were closed-minded ended up being fanatics as they could not accept what others said.

"We do not want Muslim fanatics who cannot accept views that are different from theirs. They can create havoc as seen in many Islamic countries that have Muslim fanatics."

He said these countries ended up weak and were easily pressured by the foreign powers.

"Fortunately, we in Malaysia do not face this problem and we can make our own stand because we are able to prevent these fanatics from causing problems."

Dr Mahathir warned the people against idolising a leader because it would be a serious mistake.

"We are now in the information technology era and with the various (means of) dissemination of information, we will be able to evaluate the good and bad if we follow them," he said.

"There is a need for us to be able to accept what is good and to reject those that are bad," he added.

However, if the people had a closed mind and only accepted information from one source alone, they would be bound to make many major mistakes in their lives.

Dr Mahathir also said that there was a need for a change in Kelantan to enable successful Kelantan-born businessmen to return and help develop the State.

He added that his recent meeting with about 3,000 Kelantan people in Kuala Lumpur showed that they were willing to return if that was what the people here wanted.

He also urged the people in Kelantan to read more about the Barisan Nasional and its policies.

"They should emulate leaders from foreign countries including those from Africa, Europe and Latin

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State should be a model for others, says Dr M

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America who want to learn about the success of the Government," he added.

He said some of these countries believed that Malaysia was capable of achieving the targets of Vision 2020 much earlier than anticipated.

"They no longer consider our targets as dreams but something which can be achieved by the country.

"Johor expects to reach developed status in 2005 and Selangor will do likewise. I am sure that Kelantan will not want to wait until 2050 to do so," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Kelantan should be a model for others because its population comprised mainly Malays.

"If the State is able to reach the same level of development achieved by the other States, we can be proud of it because the achievements will be by the Malays themselves," he added.

At a Press conference lat-

er, Dr Mahathir patiently fielded many questions pertaining to the election. Foreign correspondents took the opportunity looking for quotes.

Dr Mahathir was once again asked what were the BN's chances in the polls. He said the situation looked good, judging from the large turnout at the ceremony.

He said the crowd, to a certain extent, reflected their interest in the BN Government.

Asked whether the candidates contesting in the election would be his nominations or that of his deputy, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, the Prime Minister said they would be supported by all party leaders.

"The candidates are supported by all of us... myself, the Deputy Prime Minister and all other party leaders. They are not anyone's personal candidates," he said.

New candidates would also be given the opportunity to contest in the election, Dr Mahathir said, adding jokingly that talented in-

cumbents including the Prime Minister would also be contesting.

Asked whether this election campaign would be his last as Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir said:

"Well, I think I have still the chance to keep on campaigning. Unless, of course they reject me. But if I win and they want me to be Prime Minister, I will willingly sacrifice and become Prime Minister."

To another question whether he will still be the Prime Minister for the next election, he replied that it was possible.

"I am still young... only 70," he said.

To a question on whether he could cope with the campaign because of his age, Dr Mahathir said: "As you can see, I am still coping. Seriously, there is no problem. At 70, I am still young when compared to Deng Xiao Peng and a few others. I still consider myself a young man."

Asked about the campaign duration, Dr Ma-

hathir said it would be determined by the Election Commission (EC) as he could not make the decision.

He also said the date of the election would be determined by the EC.

Asked whether the campaign by BN the and Pas in Kelantan would be between religion and economics and development, he said that would not be the case at all.

"The Kelantan Government and Pas do not carry out their religious duties or preach the religion. They only make use of religion to garner support for themselves.

"There is a big difference here. For us, it is important that everybody supports religion and the performance of the rituals and the needs of the religion.

"But Pas says one thing and does another. So it has nothing to do with religion but just the ambition of Pas leaders to form the Government," he added.

To a claim by the DAP

that the election campaign was undemocratic because they were not allowed to hold rallies and the Press was controlled by the Government, Dr Mahathir said:

"I would like to control the *Rocket* but they don't allow me to control it. You know that (the *Rocket*) is their organ and all the time it attacks the Government. Actually it should be banned if we were to go by the DAP's interpretation.

"But we have not banned it. We have not banned *Harakah*, the so-called Islamic party's newspaper. There are so many vernacular newspapers which are against the Government but are still functioning."

On the DAP fielding Malay candidates, Dr Mahathir said he was not concerned because there were some people who could be misled.

"You can fool some people and these Malay candidates who subscribe to the chauvinistic Chinese leadership are a poor lot who are frustrated, that's all," he said.