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Mahathir-NEP

DR MAHATHIR ON MARKET ECONOMY AND MORAL VALUES

By: Wan A.Hulaimi

OXFORD, April 16 (Bernama) -- The New Economic Policy (NEP) in Malaysia is perhaps the only socio-engineering project that has truly succeeded and won the support of all the races in Malaysia, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said here today.

In his second speech delivered to a gathering of students and dons at the Oxford University, on the topic of the Market Economy and Moral and Cultural Values, Dr Mahathir said that critics of the NEP had expected it to fail, condemning it at first as discriminatory against the Chinese in favour of the Malays.

Even after it was seen to be winning the acceptance and cooperation of most of the Malaysian Chinese the critics turned to a new tack, he said.

"They now condemn the NEP for benefitting only a few Malays, particularly those close to the ruling party, Umno. It is true that some of those who succeeded in business are close to Umno, a party with 2.4 million paying members and many million more supporters.

"Considering that there are only six million adult Malays, it would be amazing if some of those who benefitted from the NEP are not Umno supporters," Dr Mahathir said.

Dr Mahathir added that many Malays who are in Umno or close to the leaders were far from being rich but merely benefitted from the economy like everybody else.

"There are today as many rich Malays as there are rich Chinese and ditto for the middle class and the poor. In other words, a more equitable society has emerged contributing to a degree of racial harmony," he said.

He said that the system of government and management of the economy devised by people of European origin had made them rich, but with success came the pursuit of hedonism, with the determination of the work ethics and the so-called Judaes-Christian values.

"Everyone wants to do less and less work for more pay and more leisure. Wages go up while productivity lagged behind. Competitiveness is lost."

After the 2nd World War the newly-independent countries adopted the European model of economic management, with the East Asians being perhaps the most adept at it by adopting the free market system while inbibing and improving on the technology.

"In a very short space of time, the East Asian nations had developed to the extent that they were able to compete with Europe. The retention of their work ethics apparently gives them the edge over the Europeans," Dr Mahathir said.

With Malaysia's economic success, we have been accused of beinmg egoistic by our detractors, he said.

"It is pointed out that of late we have been building monuments. The world's tallest building, the World's biggest airport, a new administrative capital, new roads, new railways, etc, etc".

Answering his own question whether Malaysia was, like many other booming success in the past, already on the road to decay "even as we announce our ambitious plans to be come a fully developed counnty, Dr Mahathir said that there were same signs.

"Drug taking has continued despite severe anti-drug laws, young people are given to loafing and the mindless pursuit of fun and pleasure. Loyalty to the establishment has diminished. Commercial crimes have increased. Corruption is still very much in evidence though not to the extent that is

made out by foreign critics."

The measures taken to stop this rot -- such as the sustaining of good work ethics and morality, and the rolling back of some elements of the national culture which are not conducive to good progress -- would not be approved by Western liberals, he said.

"God willing, by 2020 we will be a developed country in the true sense of the word -- developed materially, spritually and enduringly," he added.

Dr Mahathir's speeches at the two centres of the Oxford University -- Rhodes House and at the Convocation Hall of the Bodheian Library were well received by the audience of dons, diplomats and students who packed the halls to capacity and asked him challenging questions.

At Rhodes House this morning, soon after delivering his address on Islam the misunderstood religion, more members of the audience rose to praise him rather than criticise.

To applause from the audience, Dr Mahathir told the questioner who asked why he did not extend the spirit of goodwill of Islam to the Penans in Sarawak that the critics of the government's policy to improve the the lot of the Penans wanted them to remain primitive so that they could continue with their study of anthropology.

Dr Mahathir's visit to Oxford was the first part of his programme in his European tour before he leaves tomorrow for Croatia and Macedonia. After that he will be visiti Malta.

Accompanying Dr Mahathir and Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali is a delegation from the Malaysian business community. -- Bernama

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