

06 APR 1996

Mahathir - Malays

MALAYS MUST NOT BE FORGETFUL, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, April 6 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Malays, particularly the younger generation must not be forgetful of the struggles in the past as well as the present in efforts to make the Malay race respected in the world.

The Prime Minister recalled the colonial era when the Malays were humiliated and considered incompetent, and said it was not yet time for the Malays to relax under present circumstances.

"The struggle for race, religion and the nation is still not over, there are still many things that need to be done, we must compete not only with the people in the country but also with foreigners ... we can, we've proven our capability," he said when officiating the All-Malaysia Young Generation Leadership Convention organised by the Umno Youth Movement at the Putra World Trade Centre here today.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno President, said the Malays must continue to learn for the benefit of the race so that they could continue to be respected.

"We will be humiliated if there is no achievement, no need for us to speak of the glorious era of Hang Tuah, Hang Jebat, Majapahit, Sri Vijaya, there is no point in talking of the past ... people will not respect us for the glory of our ancestors, people respect us for the present achievement and for this we must strive, be disciplined and be committed to our struggles," he said.

The Prime Minister began his speech by quoting a talk by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Othman on man as a creature that was blessed with the power to think but had the tendency to forget and needed to be reminded all the time.

Because of this tendency to forget, man used his ability to talk or to write books to continue to remind and this became more sophisticated like the internet.

Books became an important source for reminding man and yet there were people who forgot to read books, he added.

Dr Mahathir highlighted the forgetful trait because the young generation of the Malays now did not experience the hardship suffered by the Malays during the colonial era when they were humiliated and considered incompetent.

The situation had made the Malays believe that they were truly incompetent but some Malays who realised the problem faced by the race had struggled through Umno and returned the dignity and confidence of the Malays.

He spoke of his experience during the British, Japanese and Siamese rule and how he saw an old Malay man fall after being kicked by a Thai soldier then for not stopping to pay respect to the Thai national anthem when the Thai flag was being brought down.

When the nation gained independence, the Malays felt proud and happy with their own government but the passion for self government soon disappeared.

"We forget how fortunate we are to govern our own country, at the same time we may no longer value the government that comprises people of the same religion, on the contrary, we quarrel with the government, we try to topple the government," he said.

The situation where the Malays quarrelled among themselves would not

benefit the race as much energy and time was being wasted on activities that were not useful whereas the time could be wisely spent to develop Malaysia into a nation that was respected by the world.

He was thankful that the situation was not as bad as it was in some countries like what was happening in a Muslim country, where the people were carried away by democracy, but the opposition had misused the democratic freedom to indulge in demonstrations and strikes that the country became unstable and development could not be carried out.

Dr Mahathir reminded the Malays to use democracy and the elections wisely because if they were misused the country could face disaster like what was happening in the Muslim country he referred to earlier.

"Don't think that what is happening in other countries cannot happen in this country," he said.

The Prime Minister wanted the young generation to be thankful of the achievements of the country and not to act in any way that could bring adverse repercussion because they would inherit the struggle to make Malaysia a developed nation by the year 2020.

They should not enjoy all the time or emulate western culture like keeping long hair, wearing earrings and tying their heads with handkerchief, on the other hand they should copy the intelligence, efficiency and knowledge of the western world.

The two-day convention was attended by more than 1,000 members of Umno Youth and other organisations. -- BERNAMA

AFY AO