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Mahathir-Students

MALAYSIA MUST HAVE 'BRAIN POWER', SAYS PM

By: Syed Jamil Jaafar

BOSTON, Sept 25 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has called on Malaysians to acquire "brain power" to accelerate the country's development and bring about greater prosperity.

He said Malaysia has a lot of resources but a country cannot call itself rich unless it has the capability to exploit its resources.

"We have rubber, tin, land and also the sea around us which gives us access to transport our goods," he said at a luncheon gathering attended by about 100 Malaysian students from the Boston area on Tuesday.

"We should appreciate the fact that we are almost surrounded by sea. Look at how difficult it is for Kazakhstan and Kyrgystan which have no sea outlet for their products.

"However, despite all the resources, we cannot call ourselves rich if we do not have the brain power to make something out of those resources.

"Even if we have gold under our feet, if we don't know how to use the cangkul to dig it out, how to melt the gold and convert it into ornaments, we cannot call ourselves rich."

The Prime Minister told the students that they are in the United States to be trained to maximise the use of their brain and he hoped that they would go back to help the country move towards its vision of becoming a developed nation by 2020.

Dr Mahathir spoke at length on Vision 2020 and also on the importance of racial harmony and political stability in Malaysia.

He reiterated that Malaysia plans to become a developed country in its own mould, striking a balance between material wealth and spiritual and cultural development.

"We want to emphasise morality and the promotion of good values such as the preservation of the family unit while pursuing material wealth," he said.

Dr Mahathir then answered questions on subjects ranging from corruption, the environment and democracy to the country's current account deficit.

He said corruption exists in Malaysia but the level is low as evidenced by the fact that things get done and done fast.

"If corruption was rife at all levels, things will not get done because officials will delay them in order to solicit bribes," he said.

However, he said, the government is still unhappy and wants efforts to curb corruption to be intensified.

On democracy, Dr Mahathir said all democracies have their defects and the level of democracy practised in Malaysia is just nice for the country, given its multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-cultural sensitivities.

Dr Mahathir, who arrived here on Monday after a three-day working visit to Portugal, later left for New York to attend the United Nations General Assembly.

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