

30 AUG 1996

Mahathir-Culture

MALAYSIA'S DREAM OF A NATION WITH DEVELOPED CULTURE AND HIGH CIVILISATION

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 30 (Bernama) -- Malaysia aspires to become a nation with a developed culture and high civilisation, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said in his National Day message tonight.

In the message aired by Radio and Television Malaysia (RTM), Dr Mahathir called on Malaysians to ponder and mull over this vision to achieve success.

"Let us renew our resolve to restore the dignity of the race and build a nation which stands tall together with other countries with high civilisation in the present world and in the history of mankind," he said.

In line with the theme, "Culture Shapes Progress", for the 39th National Day celebrations this year, Dr Mahathir said: "A race that is progressive, progresses because the culture of the race is in keeping with progress."

Based on the encouraging performance in the economic, political and social fields, he said that the people should be convinced that by the year 2020, Malaysia would have achieved developed nation status.

Dr Mahathir said that the progress achieved by the nation today was due to its culture which was suited to the present level of progress.

"But to become a progressive nation and race, our culture must be suited to the level of progress we wish to achieve.

"This means that we have to study and develop a culture to call our own," he said.

Although traditionalists in society would raise objections against any efforts to develop a culture, Dr Mahathir said that they should realise the changes which had taken place.

"Before making emotional protests, we should ask ourselves whether we or our culture now are still 100 per cent that of the culture of our ancestors. If we are sincere, we will surely admit that our culture has seen changes," he said.

Compared with the olden days, he said, the culture of the present society or the values they uphold and practised had changed without them planning or knowing it.

"But the race will still remain to be known as the same race," he said to dispel assumptions that a certain race would become a different race if their culture was changed.

Reiterating the nation's aspirations to become a progressive nation according to its own strength, he said that Malaysia did not want to be a country which imitated and copy all that were found in developed countries.

"However, we do not want to be different from the other developed nations merely because we want to be different from them," he said.

Besides a developed economy, Malaysia would not reject anything positive from the developed nations.

"What we reject are anything negative, whether from the developed nations or undeveloped nations," he said.

"We will choose the good and reject the bad even if they are our own," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that in view of the important role of culture in determining the progress or failure of the race and the nation, it was essential to absorb constructive elements in the Malaysian culture so that the people would have a culture suitable for a developed race.

He said that although there was at present no country that truly

reflected a country with developed culture to be emulated, the people could make their own assessment by studying changes taking place.

"However, if we were to analyse the history of races who have progressed and failed, then and now, we will be able to determine the aspects that should be part of our culture when moving towards and after achieving the objectives of Vision 2020 and beyond," he said.

He said that many aspects of the culture of the Malaysian society were suited to development and should be preserved like not being proud and arrogant, being tolerant, aware of their shortcomings and prepared to adapt to their surroundings.

He said that a developed race should be refined, placing high regard for noble values like courtesy and respect in their dealings with others.

"There is no place in progressive society for people who are self-centred. Everyone should be prepared to sacrifice some measure of freedom and personal interest for the sake of society," he said.

Extremism had no place in a society with high civilisation, even extreme goodness, he said.

"The rights of workers, the rights of women, the rights of the handicapped and human rights, they are all well and good. But extremism in demands for rights and defending them will still deprive others. As such, an ideal society will not exist," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that a society who wish to progress should not depend entirely on law enforcements because they themselves should curb any negative tendencies.

In this respect, he said, religious teachings were essential because true belief in religious values would prevent their followers from indulging in unhealthy activities although there no laws to curb them.

"A society which requires laws to monitor every movement of the members of society is not a developed and civilised race," he said.

-- BERNAMA

AZZ RM