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Mahathir-Culture

UMNO HAS CHANGED CULTURE OF MALAYS, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 10 (Bernama) -- Umno has changed the culture of the Malays and created a new culture for them that enables the race, which in the past were only able to plant padi and tap rubber, to now being able to produce sophisticated goods in modern factories, said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

From being farmers, the Malays have now emerged as an industrial community with different values more consistent with national development and competitiveness with other races, the Prime Minister and Umno president said in his presidential speech to the party's General Assembly at Dewan Merdeka in the Putra World Trade Centre today.

He said the progress achieved by Malaysia was not due to the government's policy alone but mainly because of the changing culture of the Malays and other Bumiputeras brought about by Umno.

"Before the existence of Umno, the Malays were easily humiliated and colonised. It was Umno which influenced the thinking of the Malays and gave them the courage to fight their colonial masters," he said in his over one-hour long speech which focussed entirely on issues and trends within Umno and the future of the Malays amid spreading money politics in the party.

"The current position of the Malays and other Bumiputeras has changed. No one questions our ability to administer and develop our country. We are able to prove that our administration is not only far better than the administration of our past colonisers, but much better than most countries, including some of the developed nations," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Malays, who seemingly did not understand economics, business and industries are now not only able to develop the country's economy rapidly but have made it a model in economic management.

Today, Bumiputeras who were said to be ignorant of business, who were mere "Ali" in the "Ali-Baba" partnership, own and run successful sophisticated business firms, with capital worth billions and reaping profits comparable to those of international firms.

They can afford to buy not only non-Bumiputera companies but are also able to own foreign enterprises abroad.

He cited the banking, telecommunications, aviation and motor industries in which Malays and Bumiputeras are comparable or have even superseded other races in Malaysia.

"And many more successes have been achieved by Malays and Bumiputeras because of the cultural reforms initiated by the Umno-led government and Umno," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Umno is not only a political party that provides opportunities to individuals to hold high position in the country.

"Umno too is not only meant to rule and develop this country. Umno is more than that. Umno is a reform movement for the Malays and the Bumiputeras which is more capable and effective compared to other reform movements.

"Whether we are able to restore our dignity, be a race that is highly respected and looked up to by other races in the world, or whether we become one of the advanced races, will depend on this cultural reformation that has and will be undertaken by Umno," he said.

He warned that if Umno failed to bring about these reforms, then the Malays particularly, together with other Bumiputeras, will be humiliated

and have to submit to others again.

"I am convinced that no Umno member would want the Malays to revert to their position under colonial rule. In fact, we do not want to see ourselves reverting to our position before the May 1969 incident, during which independence was rather empty for we were a race that was still backward, not knowledgeable and unsuccessful in many fields, except in politics," he said.

Nevertheless, said Dr Mahathir, the performance of the nation and that of the Malays and Bumiputeras has not reached its peak or levels that could guarantee its sustainability without supervision and guidance by Umno and the Umno-led government.

"We have not fully developed. We are undergoing the process of development. We are still fragile. If shaken, we will crack, break and fall into pieces."

The problem of moral decay and other problems such as dadah abuse, bohsia, child abuse and child abandonment, he said, to some extent originated from the affluence resulting from industrialisation and rural-urban migration.

"Rural culture differs from the culture of the urban areas. In the rural areas, we are close to our family and friends. We are not free to act as we pleased. We know what shame is."

But in towns, he said, people live in a society where they do not know one another, where colleagues and friends are of the same age, and interests and desires are the same.

Dr Mahathir expressed concern that many youths evidently are not able to deal with this freedom.

He said the religion that is taught emphasises more on the form that is supposedly Islamic than on the substance of Islamic teachings.

"The trivial is given emphasis but not the substance. Therefore, even though on the surface adherence to religion appears to be stronger now, in reality the understanding and belief in religion is weak.

"The fact is that many of those involved in dadah and undesirable activities are Malay children. There must be something that is not right with the moral education that is said to be based on religion. Religion cannot be wrong," he said.

He said the government has attempted to mould character capable of overcoming problems associated with living in affluence in the urban areas through the "Rakan Muda" programmes, including the teachings and practices of religions.

Dr Mahathir said the process of reformation of the Malays and other Bumiputeras is not over.

"A lot more needs to be done. We have identified and planned a number of things.

"But all these will not materialise if we lack honest and sincere leadership, not only for today but also for our future."

He said the culture which the Malays have created now will not be able to ensure the quality of their leaders. Their culture today is not as yet capable of creating a new Malay civilisation.

He said their mental and physical development, achievements in the field of knowledge and the arts, economic, social and political development as well as their architecture and engineering would reflect the new Malay-Bumiputera civilisation.

"This is the reformation which should be initiated by Umno, to follow that which has made Umno successful until now. Clearly, many more need to be studied, refined, checked and inculcated before the new culture of the Malays and Bumiputeras, before the emergence of a recognised and respected Malay and Bumiputera Islamic civilisation of the 21st century will

materialise," he said.
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