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Mahathir - tolerance

MALAYSIANS, SECOND TO NONE IN TERMS OF TOLERANCE, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, March 31 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight he is proud with the spirit of tolerance shown by the people, which makes his task of governing the country much easier.

He said that although leaders of other countries are no less capable but they are faced with people who are difficult to govern.

"We are lucky and I am also lucky for being in a country that is easy to govern," he said at a reception given in his honour by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Anwar Ibrahim for being bestowed two international awards recently, the Jawaharlal Nehru Award from India and King Faisal International Award 1997 from Saudi Arabia.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia also experienced the crash of a pyramid investment scheme or "Skim Cepat Kaya" several years ago but there was no riot or attempt to topple the government as happening in a country in eastern Europe.

He also talked of events in several countries due to political problems as compared to political stability in Malaysia.

During the election for example, the opposition would hurl accusations against the government but abide with the people's decision after the polls.

"The loser will give way to the victor to continue governing the country and this is absent in some countries where in not less than three months, there are already move to topple the government by creating disorder or strike," he said.

In this respect, he said trades unions such as Cuepacs are willing to sit down at the negotiation table whenever there is problem.

"This is how it is done in Malaysia which is rare in other countries and this is what which brings success to our country," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the current political stability in the country has enabled the government to implement various programmes and policies.

"Many countries want to know the secret of our success and we tell them. They try to plan well but is still far from success," he said.

He said when Malaysia achieves success, the world attributes it to the country's leader of being efficient and of integrity.

But, he said, these two qualities alone are not enough without the support of the people.

"That was why I said that these awards were for all the people of Malaysia who are moderate in their attitude, peace-loving," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the awards are also a recognition to Malaysia's foreign policy since Independence, of wanting to be friendly with all countries even those with different ideologies including communism.

Dr Mahathir said at times, Malaysia had to speak out against certain countries for being rude or criticising Malaysia.

"Since countries concerned said they believe in the freedom of speech, so we criticise them by the same token. So, they shouldn't be angry with us," he said.

He said Malaysia's policy of being friendly with others has resulted in it having many friends at the international level and this helps the country a lot such as in being elected to the president's chair of the United Nations without opposition from other quarters.

Anwar, in his tribute, said that of many awards received by Dr

Mahathir, the two recent awards were the most special.

"There has never been a leader and a Malaysian to receive such highest awards. It should be serve as an encouragement to all of us to strive for more incredible achievement," he said.

Anwar said Dr Mahathir has succeeded in defying Western stereotype that the third World should follow the West in order to achieve progress and successful in development.

Also present at the function were Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, cabinet ministers, deputy ministers, foreign diplomats, trades unions leaders and non-governmental organisations. -- BERNAMA

RV ABG