

11 MAY 1997

Mahathir-Dilemma

MY VIEWS IN "THE MALAY DILEMMA" PROVEN WRONG, SAYS DR M

KUALA LUMPUR, May 11 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today admitted that the views he expressed in his book "The Malay Dilemma" on the inability of the Malays to succeed had been proven wrong.

The Prime Minister said there was a vast difference in the conditions of the Malays now who were able to acquire any skill if given the opportunity.

"I admit... at that time, I was very disappointed after having spoken to many of my contemporaries and found they were not confident. I too became not confident that the Malays will succeed.

"But now I reverse my stand. I no longer believe what I wrote in the "The Malay Dilemma", he said when closing a forum on the history of Umno held in conjunction with the party's 51st anniversary here today.

The controversial book published in 1970 and reprinted several times, was banned in this country until Dr Mahathir became Prime Minister in 1981.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, said the ability of the Malays had reached extraordinary levels, transforming them from a community considered backward to one that is progressive.

He cited the case of a padi planter's son who now owned an airline company after been given the opportunity to acquire knowledge.

"The Malays are not inferior to others...in fact, we are now a model to many other races. They come here to see how we managed to change our situation and develop our country," he said.

"Now, after 51 years of Umno's inception and 40 years of independence, the situation has changed," he said.

Deputy Prime Minister and Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim as well as other party leaders attended the one-day forum organised by Umno Youth.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia need to seek progress and prove its achievements in whatever sectors to continue attracting attention of the world.

"If we are small and want others to know of our existence, we need to scream loudly for people to see that there is a small man below.

"But, if we are a giant, there is no need to scream. We only need to stand and people will notice us," he said to a loud applause from the audience.

Dr Mahathir stressed that the struggles of smaller and bigger nations differed in terms of approach and methods.

"On the question of (Malay) language, for instance...when we were still young, we had to shout. I also joined in and in fact, I shouted earlier than those doing it now.

"While I was studying in university, I wrote about Malay language in the Straits Times (newspaper in Singapore). At that time not many people spoke for the Malay language and we had to stress on the existence of the language," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the position of the language had since changed and there was no longer a need to stress on its usage.

In this regard, he related his recent experience while attending the Southern African International Dialogue in Botswana.

"I heard African leaders saying "terima kasih" (thank you) when concluding their speech...our language has reached there," he said amidst loud applause.

This proved that if Malaysians become a progressive race having well-known intellectuals, produced unique products and manufactured locally goods which were now being imported from developed countries, other countries would be keen to learn Malay, he said.

"Once we have come to that stage, there will no longer be a need for us to urge people to learn Malay because they themselves will come here to acquire the language," he added. -- BERNAMA

AZZ/AH TS