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Mahathir-Culture

NOT MUCH DISCUSSION ON CULTURE - MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 7 (Bernama) -- Umno delegates attending the just concluded party general assembly were not much spirited in their debate as they did not have the opportunity to criticise but had to discuss academic subjects such as culture.

Umno President Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said not many delegates discussed the role of culture and Islam in moulding character even though he had raised these matters in his policy address.

"The debate this year was not as lively as in previous years as there was no opportunity to criticise....," he said.

"If a race does not succeed, it is not because of its skin colour, climate or because its religion was not suitable or any such thing."

"The reason why a race does not succeed is because its culture cannot be reconciled with success...if it can be reconciled then it will succeed," he said.

"Culture is the sum total of the values held by a race," he added

Dr Mahathir said he had on numerous occasions raised the question of culture even in the books written by him such as "The Malay Dilemma" and "The Challenge".

He said the Japanese and the Germans were able to rise from their defeat in the Second World War and develop their destroyed economies because they had a culture which could be reconciled with success.

Dr Mahathir said in the Japanese culture, the sense of shame was intense, so intense that in the past they were willing to commit suicide or "harakiri" because of shame.

"If put to shame, they feel it very much and to prevent this shame from befalling them they will find ways and means to achieve success. The Japanese are also hardworking, determined and brave," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Germans were a very disciplined people and were able to rebuild their nation and had become stronger than the countries which defeated them in the War.

Thus it what was important here was the values of a race and its culture but unfortunately not many discussed this and the role of religion, he said.

At a press conference after the general assembly, Dr Mahathir said delegates did not speak much on the questions of culture and religion probably because they were adopting a cautious attitude.

He acknowledged that it was difficult to debate these questions as it could be misunderstood.

Asked about the Kuala Lumpur City Hall's move to arrest people for indecent dressing at entertainment outlets, Dr Mahathir said the matter would be studied to establish whether the City Hall action was in line with its regulations or otherwise.

Asked on the call for the party elections, scheduled for 1999, to be held in the year 2000, the Prime Minister said the matter had not been considered by the party. -- BERNAMA

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