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Mahathir-problems

ADMIT PROBLEMS EXIST AND TACKLE THEM, SAYS MAHATHIR

KOTA KINABALU, Feb 19 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said that Malaysians and their leaders should have the courage to admit that problems exist in order to overcome them properly.

Only upon recognising a problem would one learn to identify it and find ways to resolve it and not by denying the problem ever existed at all, he said.

Problems or challenges are there to be overcome, said the prime minister who is on a two-day visit to the state.

"Some people would say if there are problems, let them be, as they would eventually go away. But this is not true. Problems will not disappear. It is us that will have to go eventually," he said when launching a state think-tank, Indep or the Institute for Indigenous Economic Progress and its Internet homepage here.

The institute was the brainchild of state Tourism and Environment Minister Tan Sri Bernard Dompok and former federal Justice Minister Datuk Dr James Ongkili.

Dr Mahathir said the government and the people not only have to acknowledge that problems existed but also accept the prevailing reality in order to tackle them properly.

The prime minister particularly advised Sabahan Bumiputera, who still lagged behind the other communities in commerce, to amend their ways of exploiting their resources.

"If we want to progress like the other communities, we must change our way of doing things. We must combine smallholdings into large estates and manage them well. In fact we can even set up an industry.

"But if we continue using fingers to plant padi, one at a time, we'll be poor forever. So also is the case if we just spend half a day fishing," he said.

Often, Dr Mahathir said, he heard grouses over Bumiputera backwardness but the Bumiputera themselves failed to realise that their way of doing thing would never make them wealthy or progressive.

In this context, organisations such as Indep could only help or facilitate while success could only be determined by the Bumiputera themselves, he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Bumiputera would have to continue seeking knowledge and be industrious and disciplined if they were to attain progress as the other communities or keep abreast with their already advanced fellow men.

"Discipline here means going against your natural inclinations, like going against sleeping. How can you be rich if you sleep?" he said.

Chances of success are greater if one could prevail over one's own bad habits, he said.

"I hope there'll be a Bumiputera mental orientation because there must be reasons why the Bumiputera still lag behind. There will be obstructions but we can succeed," Dr Mahathir said.

More than 3,000 people attended the function.

Also present were Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Yong Teck Lee, State Legislative Assembly Speaker Datuk Hassan Alban Sandukong, federal Land and Cooperative Development Minister Datuk and Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Chong Kah Kiat. -- BERNAMA

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