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Mahathir-Ikram

INTENSIFY EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE VISION 2020, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KAJANG, April 5 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today urged Malaysians to use the new millennium as a starting point for them to intensify efforts to realise Vision 2020 to make Malaysia a developed country.

The Prime Minister said the arrival of the new millennium would bring challenges of globalisation and information technology in all aspects of human life, including the economy, social, education, business and industrial sectors.

"We cannot isolate ourselves from these changes. What we need to do is prepare ourselves to tackle the challenges and grab the opportunities created by these changes," he said in his speech launching Kolej Ikram here.

His speech was read out by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Dr Mahathir was disappointed that government allocations for research and development (R&D) were not fully used up by research institutions.

He congratulated Kumpulan Ikram Sdn Bhd for its R&D efforts in multimedia applications for geotechnical information system on land in the country.

Dr Mahathir also called on the people to always have the desire to learn, conduct research and make inventions, and that they must persevere until they have achieved success.

He said with this attitude, "we will inevitably become a developed race who can successfully compete with others".

"We should not think that the efficiency in conducting R&D lies with other people or certain races only. Actually, we also have the same ability. They also acknowledged that quite a lot of research and development has been undertaken in this country, especially in agriculture," he said.

However, the country's achievements in fields like mechanical, electrical and electronics, medical and several others were still lacking, he said.

Dr Mahathir also said peace and harmony were the basis for any country to achieve prosperity, progress and the civilisation of its race.

"All the ambitions and beautiful dreams of a country will evaporate without peace and harmony. Even rich and independent countries cannot maintain their independence and wealth without peace," he said.

As such, he reminded the people to continue to strengthen unity and preserve the existing peace and harmony.

"Unity and understanding must be in its complete sense, whether among humans, races, communities or between government agencies and the private sector," he said.

Dr Mahathir said culture also played a very important role in determining whether a race would be developed or otherwise.

Although culture was inherited, contemporary influence also had an effect in shaping it, he said.

"As such, we can consciously shape a culture that can bring progress and success to us," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said most privatised agencies had brought benefits to the country, but the government would study any weaknesses in the privatisation policy to rectify them.

"Privatisation has also given us an opportunity to make a success of the New Economic Policy (NEP), that is to eliminate identification of race with occupation," he said.

He said allegations by foreigners that the NEP benefited only several cronies and families of government leaders were made out of their hatred for Bumiputeras whom they had labelled as stupid, lazy and the like.

"Theirs is a racist attitude that assumes Asians cannot possibly be honest," he said.

Also present at the ceremony were Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu and Deputy Science, Technology and Environment Minister Datuk Abu Bakar Daud.

-- BERNAMA

APG YBY