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Mahathir-Malaysian

MAHATHIR CALLS FOR THE MOULDING OF THE NEW MALAYSIAN

SEREMBAN, Aug 12 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysia needs a new breed of citizens who boldly take on challenges to perform world-class feats and at the same time attain glory for themselves.

Mariner Datuk Azhar Mansor who accomplished a solo east-west circumnavigation of the globe on the yacht Jalur Gemilang last night best exemplified the new Malaysian the nation desired, he said.

"He is what we call the new Malay, the new Malaysian, who dares to face challenges, unlike before when we feel so inferior, incapable of achieving anything," he said.

The prime minister, who began a two-day working visit to Negeri Sembilan today, said this when addressing civil servants at the Municipal Hall here.

Also present were Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohamed Isa Abdul Samad and Information Minister Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob.

Dr Mahathir said the government had attempted various approaches since Independence to create a new breed of self-confident Malaysians who are proud of their own potentials and capabilities.

During the early post-independence days, the country's citizens, especially the Malays and other bumiputera, had the tendency to regard themselves as helpless minnows, he said.

They lacked the confidence then of being capable of glorious accomplishments for self, country and the world after having been too long under colonial rule which robbed them of a national identity and self-esteem, he said.

"Independence means nothing if we continue being like we used to be, like in those colonial days... independence is meaningless if we don't try to change the course of our own and the nation's destiny and if we don't develop the country," he said.

For this reason, the government after independence strove to mould a citizenry whose characteristics differed from that of a subservient nation under colonial rule, he said.

The result was a multi-talented Malaysian nation whose willingness to take on challenges and whose accomplishments and progress the world had to reckon with, he said.

"This is the change that we had attempted and achieved... the Malaysian Malays, Chinese, Indians, Ibans, Kadazans, Dusuns, Muruts of today are no longer like the colonised communities that they were," he said.

Malaysians were now an educated and skillful lot who could run the country well and could discern between good and bad, he said.

They too had put democracy to good use and would not try to destabilise the country unnecessarily, he said.

Dr Mahathir said that since there were still backward countries despite having them gaining independence at the same time as Malaysia, the argument that just any government could bring progress to a country was fallacious.

He said that before the 1989 CHOGM (Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting), several presidents and prime ministers of African and Caribbean countries which gained independence at about the same time as Malaysia turned down his invitation to visit the country thinking that she was like theirs.

When they attended the 1989 CHOGM which Malaysia hosted they marvelled

at Malaysia's progress and later asked for return visits to learn from the country's experience in nation-building.

"Ours is unusual... we became independent and devised our own indigenous way to develop the nation," he said.

The prime minister paid tribute to civil servants who, he said, were equally instrumental as the political leaders in bringing about Malaysia's robust and rapid development thus far.

"Even if we have a visionary and far-sighted elected government aspiring to make the country a developed nation, such ambitious plans would just remain at that if government servants are incapable of translating them and implementing the policies," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia inherited a good administrative machinery from the British upon which the government later made improvements to raise staff efficiency so as to realise the aspirations of the leaders to whom the people gave their mandate.

"The reason that we are reasonably well off today is that the governments voted in since independence genuinely desired to develop the nation and to enrich the citizens.

"Leaders have no desire to preoccupy themselves with self-enrichment..we'll not live forever.. like normal human beings, leaders too die..why let ourselves be cursed upon our death for our greed," he said.

The prime minister expressed hope that government servants would discharge their responsibilities sincerely and truthfully although they may not want to vote for the government for some reasons or other.

-- BERNAMA

AFY RYN