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PM: Wrong choice can prove costly

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KUALA TERENGGANU, Thurs. - Still keeping the date of the general election close to his chest, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today advised the people to be wise in voting in the next Government.

A wrong decision, the Prime Minister said, would stifle the country's development and jeopardise their future and that of future generations.

Dr Mahathir, who arrived this morning for a 1 1/2-day visit, was addressing Government employees who packed the Dewan Besar Wisma Darul Iman. Also present were his wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali and Menteri Besar Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad.

He warned the people against being influenced by certain parties, who were making promises just to gain their own political mileage.

He said no one, at this stage, could deny the benefits every Malaysian had directly or indirectly gained from the country's development programmes since independence 42 years ago.

The Prime Minister cited education and infrastructural facilities as some of the benefits that were being enjoyed by the people under the present Government.

He said the economic and political stability of the country had lured foreigners to seek jobs in Malaysia. This was because the situation in their countries were not as encouraging.

"In fact, if we were to open our doors more freely, many more including those from Latin America and Africa would want to work in our country," adding that it would only be an irony for Malaysians themselves not to appreciate the fact.

He reminded the people not to be convinced that the country would remain independent in the true sense of the word forever if they did not make the right decision for their future.

"Attempts have been made (by foreign powers) to recolonise us by controlling our economy," he said, adding that there were already countries which had been dictated by outsiders.

Foreign powers, through programmes like the International Monetary Fund, are out to do away with policies adopted by the Government such as the New Economic Policy which is aimed at distributing the country's wealth fairly among the various races.

He said the absence of such policies and the introduction of tests to determine qualifications would deprive many (Bumiputeras) from becoming professors, university lecturers and from holding other high posts.

He expressed regret that instead of being thankful, some of those who enjoyed high positions condemned the Government.

"I am disappointed with those who seem to have forgotten the fact that without (the Government's) help, they may not be where they are now."

Therefore, the people must be careful by not letting themselves be instigated by power-crazy people.

He said it was natural that many people were inclined to become the Prime Minister, Ministers, MPs and other important office holders.

"But let us be aware that these positions are not for decoration purposes, but for us to serve the people to the best of our ability.

"It is not (the passport) for us to own luxurious cars and live in castles, but to serve and help dislodge attempts to colonise us."

The Prime Minister drew loud applause when he said: "We do not mean to blow our trumpet, but Malaysia was the only one among the 182 countries

all over the world which was prepared to introduce currency exchange rate control measures to save its economy and that had proven successful."

Other countries, he said, did not do so as such measures had never been tested before.

He said the Government had picked up enough courage to introduce the measures (in September last year) amid strong objection by economic experts and which led to the resignation of the Bank Negara Governor.

Today, he said, many countries had praised Malaysia for its measures and wanted to emulate this country.

Later, speaking at a silat exponents gathering in Dungun, Dr Mahathir said silat taught its exponents to discipline themselves.

Earlier, he was presented with a silat headgear and costume by Menteri Besar Tan Sri Wan Mohktar Ahmad who is also the chairman of Pesilat Terengganu.

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