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PM upset R&D funds not fully utilised

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KAJANG, Mon. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir is disappointed that Government allocations for research and development are not fully utilised because research bodies do not carry out projects.

He said while Malaysia had made a lot of progress in the field of agriculture, it was very much lagging in technical fields like mechanics, electronics and medicine.

"We cannot keep thinking that only certain races or people have R&D expertise. Actually, we also have the same ability.

"If we have not achieved success, it is because in our culture, the values which I had mentioned had not been given priority or emphasis," he said.

He named these values as curiosity, a desire to know, to learn, to research, to create and diligence.

The Prime Minister said this today at the launch of Kolej Ikram. His speech was read out by his deputy Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as he is still warded at the National Heart Institute for a lung infection.

Before reading the speech, Abdullah told guests at the launch that the Prime Minister was sad that he could not keep his promise to attend the function.

In his speech, Dr Mahathir said while many people were comfortable with modern technology like cars, radios and televisions, they had no desire to want to create these things.

"That is why we cannot progress or become a great civilisation," he said, adding that Malaysians could consciously shape their culture into one which adopted such values.

Dr Mahathir also said for a country to prosper, progress and become a civilisation, it must have harmony and peace.

"We thank God that our country is blessed with harmony and peace even during an economic crisis. Let us strengthen our unity to preserve this harmony and peace," he said.

The Prime Minister said this was important because the new millennium, which was just eight months away, would bring challenges in the form of globalisation and the use of information technology.

Commending Kolej Ikram for its developmental efforts since it was privatised from the Public Works Department, Dr Mahathir said the privatisation policy had helped achieve the aims of the New Economic Policy, which was to abolish the identification of race by occupation.

If at one time only non-Bumiputeras were involved in business, he said today, Bumiputeras were involved in all kinds of businesses and management activities.

"The accusation by foreigners about the NEP benefiting a few cronies and the families of government leaders is due to their hatred of Bumiputeras whom they label as stupid and lazy.

"They want all Government activities to be privatised to them because they know they can obtain big profits if they get the projects," he said, describing this as a "racist" attitude.

Dr Mahathir said the fact that there were so many Bumiputeras who obtained opportunities without being related to any government leader was ignored.

"Anyone who is given an opportunity is considered a crony and family. On the other hand, if family and friends of leaders live in poverty, this

does not constitute proof that cronyism and nepotism do not exist in Malaysia," he said.

The Prime Minister said the Government was sensitive to feedback on the privatisation policy and strove to rectify weaknesses which surfaced.

He said the country had developed successful privatisation models despite not having many models to emulate when it embarked on the policy many years ago.

Ikram (Institut Kerja Raya Malaysia) was originally PWD's training and research organisation, and was privatised to Kumpulan Ikram Sdn Bhd on Jan 1, 1997. The college was set up a year later.

It offers a variety of technical and business courses. It also recently developed a prototype geotechnical information system application, said Kumpulan Ikram chairman Datuk Mohd Haris Abas in his speech.

He said upon completion, it would provide data on soil conditions throughout the country through the Internet.

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