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Mahathir

APPROPRIATE CULTURES AND VALUES CAN DEVELOP A BACKWARD RACE

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 26 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today a backward race can become developed and be able to control the world if it assimilates appropriate cultures and values.

The prime minister said that in reality, all races were equally capable and no race or ethnic group was more capable than others.

"If the values and cultures are not good the race can replace them with good ones if its wants to restore progress of the race," he said when opening the Young Malay Professionals Congress at the Putra World Trade Centre, here.

He cited the example of how a community from pre-Islamic days had accepted the noble and good values of Islam and emerged as a dignified and civilised race.

Dr Mahathir said the Malays were not successful now although they were Muslims because they did not practise the true Islamic teachings.

"We are brothers but we constantly question the faith of other Muslims. We are not disciplined and do not keep our pledges. We like to listen to and believe the slander of people with ulterior motives. Hence, although we are Muslims, we are not successful, not noble people," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Malays had only emerged as a modern civilised race 42 years ago and were still immature but unfortunately there were already signs that this young civilisation would deteriorate quickly.

He said many people believed that the Malays would continue to rule the country with the protection and efforts made to develop the race.

"With this belief, we return to our old culture, the culture of easily being satisfied, jostling for power and having animosity among ourselves. If this change in culture is not curbed, the modern civilisation which we have just built will crumble," he said.

"In view that it is only 40 years old, it'll probably not leave anything meaningful behind. The efforts made in four decades of independence will go to waste," he said.

He said extremist belief in democracy had already brought changes to the values and culture of the Malays with courtesy, respect, discipline and the spirit of nationalism replaced by the liberal culture and unrestricted self-freedom of the West.

The prime minister said that although the struggle for reform should be a continuous process, it should be done for the good and any change must be carefully assessed before implementation.

Dr Mahathir also touched on the economic status of the Malays and the efforts of the West to arrange the world economy through what was termed as the globalisation era.

He said although the government had introduced the New Economic Policy, many bumiputeras still could not compete with the other communities which were more skilled, including in business and industry.

He said the policy to help the bumiputeras was still needed and he was confident that with its continued implementation, the Malays would ultimately be able to compete with the other races without government help.

On globalisation, the prime minister said the concept was created because the foreign capitalists saw that the development of telecommunication technology could be used to monopolise all trade activities worldwide, and through that, politics.

Dr Mahathir said terms like free market, borderless world and level

playing field need not be rejected just because they were coined by races which had colonised the country.

However, these concepts must be understood in the context that Malaysia, as a fragile developing nation, had glaring disparity in development among the races and was still unable to compete in most fields and industries.

"Surely, if we accept equal treatment for all parties, whether from within or outside the country, as advocated by them, we cannot differentiate between treatment among the races as provided for by the NEP (New Economic Policy)...are we confident of our ability without any protection from a government which sympathises with us," he said.

During question-and-answer time with about 1,200 congress participants, Dr Mahathir said success in whatever field, including business, could only be achieved if the Malays merged knowledge with assimilation of appropriate culture.

He said they must also build up lasting credibility in their chosen field and this included keeping promises, settling loans and being sincere in daily business.

"We want our race to inculcate a culture of service before payment so that we will not be obliged to anyone," he said.

Dr Mahathir said this principle of not seeking favours would enable Malaysia to criticise other parties or countries that if felt had done something wrong.

The Malay community must also discard the get-rich-quick culture including the "Ali Baba" practice, he added.

The two-day congress with the theme, "Malay professionalism in facing the Challenges of K-Ekonomi" is organised by the Mara Junior Science College Alumni.

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