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Mahathir-Hatred

DR M: HATRED INSTILLED AMONG M'SIANS MAKING THEM UNABLE TO THINK

By: Wan A Hulaimi

LONDON, Jan 30 (Bernama) -- The feelings of hatred towards certain people instilled in the minds of Malaysians right from kindergarten to university was making them unable to think for themselves, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"At the kindergarten, they are taught to hate certain people, told to spit and step on the pictures of certain people.

"This sticks with them until they reach university where they are again incited to hate certain quarters. They can no longer think," the prime minister said at a meeting with some 500 Malaysian students at Malaysia Hall here.

He said some Muslims did not consume pork not because of the religion but because they were taught from childhood that pork was dirty.

"Likewise, they had been taught from young not to accept other religions," he said.

Dr Mahathir said some Malaysians at present accepted whatever one side told them and refused to listen to the explanations of the other side.

"We should not have a closed mind. We must listen to both sides, only then can we make decisions," he told the receptive audience.

Such a situation, the prime minister said, could lead to disunity among the people and weaken the country.

"Some people think they benefit from such a split. The ones actually benefiting are the foreigners," he said.

Rejecting the excessive freedom found in the West, Dr Mahathir warned Malaysians that some foreigners were out to "control our culture, politics and economy".

"We see the governments of free countries brought down through incitements from outside. They then try to split the country into three," he said.

In Malaysia, he said, efforts to break up the society had succeeded to a certain stage.

"For instance, we find that the culture of not appreciating anyone and the rejection of Malaysia's rapid development are something that will be there irrespective of who is in power.

"They say don't give importance to history, our background. We just think of this time. This is our time," he said.

Stressing the need not to ignore history, he said: "I fear that if we don't know where we came from, we don't know where we are -- and where will go to. That's why our history has many lessons for us," he said.

A student from the floor asked Dr Mahathir why was it that if he valued history so much, he had during Tunku Abdul Rahman's leadership written to the late prime minister demanding his resignation.

Dr Mahathir replied that he remembered well the letter and asserted that the incident had nothing to do with history but was instead concerned with the needs of the Malays at the time.

"We have to learn from history. When the Tunku went, he was succeeded by Tun Razak, his designated successor. There was no struggle. Until I came along and people still can't forgive me for writing the letter. He (Tunku) was a great leader. I admit that. He did a lot for our independence."

Dr Mahathir said change must be for the better and not just for its own sake.

He gave the example of Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia who was

removed and replaced by an even bigger dictator, Haile Mariam.

In lighter mood, he said leaders would eventually go. They grow old and they died.

He said he would like to frustrate many people by staying on, but when he retired he had no intention of becoming a Malaysian senior minister.

Another questioner asked him if Umno needed to change to become more relevant.

Dr Mahathir replied that Umno had undergone many changes since its formation and was sensitive to the feelings of the people.

"That is why we introduced the NEP (New Economic Policy).....(to deal with) the dissatisfaction about the economic imbalance under the Tunku.

"Then the Chinese felt they were not given a fair share in the government. What Tun Razak did was to change the Alliance to include more opposition parties including Gerakan. Even PAS was admitted at that time. We always have our ears to the ground," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that words like cronism and mega projects were not Malaysian in origin but introduced by the foreign press to criticise Malaysian development.

On mega projects, he said that the size of a project was relative. "For example the KLIA project may look mega at this time but we are planning ahead when the number of people travelling by air will increase many times."

The prime minister went to length to explain why he took action against his former deputy Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and subsequently sacked him from Umno at the request of party members.

"By God, I am not telling lies," Dr Mahathir said.

Talking on his pet subject, information technology (IT), he reminded students that it was necessary for the people to keep pace with progress on that front because if they did not understand the technology they would not be able to use it.

Commenting on President Bill Clinton's remark about continued growth in the United States for the past 106 months, Dr Mahathir said that in the past 106 months, 20 million jobs were lost in Indonesia.

There was a stir in the hall when a woman identifying herself as Umi Hafilda Ali took the microphone and swore that the contents of her letter about the alleged wrongdoings of Anwar were true.

The audience, clearly taken aback, turned quiet for several minutes as Umni spoke with an emotion-filled voice.

Dr Mahathir thanked her but did not say anything else in response to her statement.

Umi earlier told the audience not to mistaken her as part of Dr Mahathir's delegation.

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