

07 OCT 2000

Mahathir-Perception

MALAYSIA NOT TO BE COPYCAT DEVELOPED NATION, SAYS PM

By: Wan A. Hulaimi

CAMBRIDGE, Oct 7 (Bernama) -- Malaysia will be a developed nation in 2020 "in our own mould", and not a copy of the developed countries of today, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in his keynote address at a conference on "Malaysia in the New Millennium", here.

Expanding on his perception of Malaysia into the next thousand years, Dr Mahathir said that it would be democratic, but not a liberal democracy, where anything would be accepted unquestioningly in the name of democracy.

"Democracy is meant to serve us not we to serve democracy," he said at the conference organised by the Cambridge University Malaysia Society (CUMAS).

He foresaw condemnation by the West, but he said that Malaysia would not pay any heed to that "because we will continue to know what is good for us".

Although at the end of his speech Dr Mahathir admitted that he was a "bad futurologist", he was generally optimistic that Malaysia would be a stable, rapidly growing country that would be developed by 2020 because he was hopeful that Malaysians would make every effort to bring about the best scenario for their country.

He said: "The present government is dedicated to achieving this vision. I believe most Malaysians are similarly dedicated."

He saw the most likely scenario of Malaysia as a developed nation in the new millennium with 30 million plus hard-working, peace-loving people who will be respected and trusted by the rest of the world, he told the gathering of students and dons at this most august university.

This mood of optimism contrasted with his expressed pessimism at a gathering of Muslim leaders and intellectuals in London last Wednesday when he expressed concern about Muslims, including some in Malaysia, who did not understand the future and were eager to split hair and were eager to accuse others of impiety and apostasy and were themselves eager to espouse martyrdom.

He said his belief was that Malaysians by and large were reasonable and moderate people be they Malays, Chinese, Indians, Ibans, Kadazans or whatever.

Even then, he said that he could not be certain.

Dr Mahathir said: "No one can be certain of what the future will bring. We can hazard a guess. We can make deductions based on an analysis of what had happened in the past, on the character and psyche of the people, on the trends and developments in the world outside. But we can never be certain."

He said that changing governments for the sake of change could harm the country because of the resulting uncertainty.

Some would say that it was not democratic for the same party to be elected again and again and it was possible that Malaysia would experience frequent changes of government in the future, he observed.

Such changes would mean that the elected governments would change most of the plans and policies of the previous government, and this would be disruptive.

"Perhaps the changes would be good for the country. But changes must create uncertainties and uncertainties must disrupt," he said.

"Changing government may be considered democratic but it is very disruptive. It affects a country's development adversely. Again we have to consider whether we want democracy for its sake or we want democracy for the good that it can deliver."

He said the possibility of another May 13 -- the period of racial strife in 1969 -- recurring when the government became weak or a new government was put in place was "very real".

Incidents like the recent al-Ma'unah violence in Sauk could also recur if the campaign of hate promoted by certain so-called religious groups did not stop, Dr Mahathir said.

"Hate is a powerful emotion. It can move people to do the unthinkable," said the prime minister.

To continue developing the country the government must be strong, and although he did not see the possibility of either PAS forming a government in the near future, both the party and the DAP could weaken the Umno-led government.

He said: "If PAS through its campaign of hate, and DAP with its racialism were to undermine the Barisan Nasional and cause the BN's majority to be greatly reduced, then Malaysia would have such an ineffective government that it will be unstable and incapable or progressing economically."

Projects such as the Penang Bridge or the Proton car -- which are now accepted as useful but were then criticised -- would not have been possible if the government had had a small majority, he said.

A PAS government would not be able to carry out or even conceive ideas that had been implemented by the BN government, he said even if some Malays thought that there was no difference between PAS and Umno.

He continued: "If I may hazard a guess, Malaysia under PAS rule is not going to be politically stable and will not develop. Malaysia will probably regress. Its domestic policies and its relations with other countries would not work. Despite claiming that any government can do what the Barisan Nasional government has done, it cannot even supply water to Kelantan."

Without referring specifically to any country, Dr Mahathir said that although the 'developed countries' were against the present BN government and would like to see a change in government in Malaysia, his suspicion was that they were not going to like a PAS government either.

"They will continue to be busy trying to undermine this so-called Muslim government," he said.

He urged Malaysians to learn from the past and not just be anxious to try new things to change because to do so would bring about any of the scenarios.

"If we have learnt from the past then it is likely that we will continue to progress to become a developed country by 2020," he said.

-- BERNAMA

WAH RM