

06 JUL 2001

Abdullah-Competition

ABDULLAH WANTS MALAYSIAN TO BE STRONG TO FACE COMPETITION

SEREMBAN, July 6 (Bernama) -- Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the possibility of Malaysians being dominated and subjugated again is not an imaginary threat but real if the people are not strong enough to face up to competition.

"This is not an imaginary threat. It is real. The world around us is honing its skills. Globalisation and the fast development of information technology is making competition more keen and intense," he said when launching the 10th anniversary celebration of Kolej Tuanku Ja'afar here today.

He said, "We can see from neighbouring countries how turmoil, instability and poor planning has rendered nations rich in resources becoming a battlefield where neighbours kill neighbours and children starve and have no prospect for a future."

Abdullah urged Malaysians not to be satisfied with what they have because the process of learning and improving never stops.

"If we have done well, let us strive to do better. Let us strive to be the best and ensure that our country and our people will never be dominated again," he said.

He said we should not lose sight of the fact that Malaysians were a subjugated lot for 450 years.

"But we were conscious of the needs of our country. We wanted to get out there and make the difference, make our nation strong and united so that we could compete with the best. It was because we lacked so many things as a nation that we felt the need and urge to strive for development.

"We were a population hungry for development, hungry for improving our lot, hungry for success. We studied hard, some under the light of oil lamps, we worked hard, we scrimped and saved. The Malaysian we see today is the result of that hunger we had," he said.

He said, the Malaysia of today was due to the foresight of the country's founding fathers who wanted the nation to be independent in every way and due to careful planning, of harmony and of the far-sightedness of our leaders like Tuanku Abdul Rahman, Tun Abdul Razak, Tun Hussein Onn and Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Abdullah said many of the young do not want to hear of the past as they were only interested in what today had to offer them.

"Discipline is lacking in schools and universities, the hunger to achieve academic excellence is slackening, undergraduates discard their books for placards, they abandon the sports fields and march down streets instead, they want to shape the destiny of their people when they have not yet shaped their own destinies," he said.

He said to move the country forward, the young have to equip themselves and there was no substitute for education.

Abdullah urged all Malaysians to take advantage of the opportunities offered by an increasingly borderless world.

Saying that the best foreign universities are being encouraged to set up offshore branches in Malaysia, he added that the dynamic relationship between government, private sector and strategic foreign academic partners would no doubt help Malaysia achieve its goals.

"By building a world-class system that is flexible and innovative we hope to create in Malaysia a regional education hub for educational

excellence," he said.

The Deputy Prime Minister also said the continued development of private institutions of higher learning must take into account the need to make private education accessible to students who have hitherto not seen it as a viable option.

"I would like to urge more private sector companies to offer scholarship schemes to local universities and colleges, thus linking education with the development of human resources for relevant industries," he said.

He said Malaysia was undergoing the process of formulating a knowledge-based economic masterplan and this blueprint would propel Malaysia into the new economy by leveraging on the intensive use of knowledge, skills, linkages, ideas and technology.

"I believe the success of such a transformation will hinge on our ability to develop and strengthen what has become the most important factor of production

-- human capital, especially in terms of knowledge.

"We are now faced with the task of populating our country with skilled, innovative and creative workers who will be the catalyst in moving the entire Malaysian economy up the value-added chain through the utilisation of physical infrastructure available," Abdullah said.

He added that the heart of the plan was the need to develop human capital through a first-class education system.

He added that the government's target of reducing the number of low-knowledge workers depended on the emergence of a talent pool of young workers who would lead the sectoral shift from manufacturing to information and communication technology and other high-tech industries.

He said such domestic capacity building was increasingly pertinent in the globalised marketplace and that Malaysian graduates would have to compete with the best of the best in a fiercely competitive job market.

"The failure to produce graduates who are able to succeed in such an environment would be to the grave detriment of the entire country, he added.

-- BERNAMA

RP APG DVS