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Umno-Mahathir

MAHATHIR ADVISES MALAYS NOT TO GO FOR QUICK GAINS

KUALA LUMPUR, June 21 (Bernama) -- UMNO president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said it is impossible for Bumiputeras to obtain their share of the economy if they continue to be impatient in getting rich.

With such a weakness, they would sell every opportunity and allocation given to them, the Prime Minister said in his address at the UMNO General Assembly here.

"Shares, licences, permits, contracts and others specially allocated to them were immediately sold to others to gain instant profit. After that, they will re-apply. With that, the only business in which Bumiputeras participate is selling their special privilege," he lamented.

By right, Dr Mahathir said with the large amount of government aid, the objective of increasing the economic share of Bumiputeras to 30 percent of the economy should have been achieved by now.

Unfortunately, Malays and other Bumiputeras did not possess a business culture, he said.

Although there were those who succeeded to the point of owning big businesses and industry, he said the majority of the Malays failed to maintain and expand their business.

In the end, all assistance and opportunities failed to ensure the success of the New Economic Policy (NEP), he added.

To ensure that shares distributed to Bumiputeras continued to remain in their possession, the government was forced to establish unit trusts and other Bumiputera agencies which also enabled more Bumiputeras to own shares in large corporations.

Of the 12 million Bumiputeras, Dr Mahathir said more than seven million owned shares in big corporations through unit trusts.

"Allegations that the NEP only benefited several government cronies are not true. If we wanted to enrich our cronies, it would have been easier for us to distribute all the shares to them only and not to the seven million other Bumiputeras," he added.

But this method did not provide the opportunity for Bumiputeras to participate directly in managing business as they would only be sleeping partners who were naive in business management.

In addition, many corporations in which PNB (Permodalan Nasional Bhd) was a major shareholder were not active because PNB too, did not participate directly in the management of many companies it owned, the Prime Minister said.

"This means Malays will forever be naive about business. This will not meet the objectives of the NEP," he added.

Following this, the government had identified Bumiputera corporate leaders who had succeeded in managing private and public companies but their number is small. Those capable were given the opportunity to buy a big amount of shares or given government privatised projects.

Eventhough they had generally succeeded in running and managing these large businesses, Dr Mahathir said some foreigners as well as some Malays were not pleased with their success.

Allegations had been made by the foreign media that all those who were given opportunities were government cronies, without taking into account who they were, he added.

"This means no Bumiputera who is given opportunities can escape

allegations of being a government crony and if the government does not want to be accused, then Bumiputera individuals cannot be given any opportunity to participate in the corporate sector."

The Umno president said if the government had been satisfied in seeing Bumiputeras in large-scale businesses, then there would be no need for the government to expose itself to false accusations by giving opportunities to prominent Malay businessmen.

Dr Mahathir quipped that foreigners would perhaps stop accusing the government of practising cronyism if everything was sold to them or for the government not to have privatisation and continue with government ownership.

"Please ask the Telekom employees whether they are willing to revert to being government employees and be paid government wages? Besides we know that all government-owned corporations are not that progressive," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the government implemented the NEP and undertook other efforts to ensure a meaningful participation of Malays but unfortunately, after more than 30 years, they had yet to own 30 percent of the country's wealth.

After 43 years of relentless efforts, billions of ringgit allocated and the establishment of several banks and a variety of funds, the achievement of the Malays in trade and industry was still low and they had not moved their businesses from the sidewalk to a concrete shop, the Prime Minister said.

Dr Mahathir said new townships in the country did not reflect Malaysia's multi-racial society while in the old towns, many Malay urbanites consisted of squatters.

"Was this caused by the government's lack of effort?" he asked

"A race which has been deprived of government assistance can clearly succeed," he said without elaborating.

"Why can't the Malays who are given all sorts of help succeed?" he asked.

Dr Mahathir said the Malays would still fail in trade and industry so long as they did not want to admit their weaknesses and were not prepared to correct their mistakes.

He stressed that those who wanted to get rich quickly would be poor quickly as only those who worked hard, persevered, were patient and honest would succeed, be they in the economy or other fields.

The Prime Minister said Malays who did not rely on their special rights, worked very hard, did not wish to get rich quickly, did things in the legitimate way and were patient would become Malaysians who were resilient and successful.

Dr Mahathir said a start must be made for Malays to start working hard.

"A start begins with discarding the belief that we will be safe no matter which government is in power, as it will assist us. Think of the possibility that we may not be protected and that we need to be independent, stand on our own feet."

Dr Mahathir said when when globalisation became a reality, the Malays would no longer be able to hide behind their special rights, the NEP or behind their borders.

"When the walls of the nation are dismantled by foreigners, all policies that protect the special rights of Malays as sons of the soil will be challenged," he added.

The Prime Minister also touched on the Malaysian economy which he described as having recovered, although, not fully, due to the economic slowdown of other countries and not because of the weakness in the government's approach.

Per capita income had risen to US\$4,000 from US\$300 prior to

Independence in 1957, he said.

He also recalled that when foreign currency manipulators attacked the ringgit, they waited for Malaysia to beg from the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.

"But we did not beg. We recovered through own efforts, with our own money."

This, he said, made some foreigners even more furious and there were now signs that they were trying again to destroy the national economy through biased media reports so that foreign investors would shun Malaysia.

"We are monitoring these attempts and will develop our own strategies (to counter them)," he said.

The Prime Minister also slammed some foreigners and their media for harbouring ill-feelings towards Malaysia.

"They only wish to see destruction, which befell other countries, to happen to our country. They wish that we will become their puppet client state."

-- BERNAMA
SHO SHY AAM