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`Don't judge PM based on incidents'

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - The people should consider how Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has performed in his 20 years as Prime Minister rather than judge him based on incidents in the last few years.

This sentiment was shared by speakers and participants at a seminar themed "Dr Mahathir's Thoughts for the Young Generation" at the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka today.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said it was unfair to judge Dr Mahathir based solely on what had been happening of late such as demonstrations, riots and the spread of slander and lies, especially by the Opposition.

"My message to Malaysians, especially the young generation, is that they should give due credit and respect to the man who has brought Malaysia to what it is known today locally and internationally."

He also asked the people to stop poisoning the minds of the young people with slander and lies against Dr Mahathir and the Barisan Nasional leadership.

Speaking to reporters after opening the seminar, Abdullah said the introduction of various policies by Dr Mahathir had led to Malaysia developing rapidly.

He said Dr Mahathir had taken bold measures, knowing very well he would come under fire, but these had benefited the nation and people in the long run.

Citing examples, he said people criticised Dr Mahathir when he came up with the idea of producing the national car, hosting the Formula One race, and privatising some public sectors, infrastructure and highway projects.

"There were people who were angry with him, criticised and slandered him, and tarnished his name locally and internationally. But we must realise that under his administration the nation has progressed tremendously, practically in all fields.

"Dr Mahathir has taught Malaysians to boldly face challenges."

Abdullah said Malaysians had become more confident of facing challenges in the new millennium.

Asked on Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Aziz Nik Mat's statement that Malaysia "appeared peaceful" through the use of Internal Security Act, Abdullah said: "We are a peaceful nation and I do not want to see this being disrupted." Abdullah, who is also Home Minister, said it was correct that the Government's action in stopping demonstrations had made Malaysia safe and peaceful.

Meanwhile, DBP director-general Datuk A. Aziz Deraman said it planned to hold a similar seminar on a bigger scale.

The objective of the seminar was to help the younger generation understand the thoughts of Dr Mahathir so that they could interpret them to build up the family, society and nation.

Wangsa Maju branch of the Federation of Peninsular Malay Students acting president Jaafar Abdul Rahim said such a seminar was crucial as the young generation must be given an opportunity to understand the thoughts of Dr Mahathir.

He decribed Dr Mahathir as a creative, innovative and proactive leader who had administered the nation with excellence.

Under the leadership of Dr Mahathir, Jaafar said, Malaysia enjoyed stability.

He added that Malaysia managed to speedily recover from the recent economic downturn because of the brave moves and risks taken by Dr Mahathir which were now acknowledged by many developing and developed nations.

The seminar was organised by the Wangsa Maju branch of the FPMS with the co-operation of DBP.

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