

20/04/2001

PM shares views with African students

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today shared his views on Malaysia's success story and a broad range of other issues including globalisation with more than 1,000 African students pursuing tertiary education at local institutions of higher learning.

The Prime Minister, who said he was overawed by the huge gathering of African students in Malaysia, had his audience in stitches several times when he shared his views and experiences with them.

Dr Mahathir was speaking at the Young African Leadership and Intellectual Dialogue: Dr Mahathir's Perspective On the Role of the New Generation in Developing Countries at Putra World Trade Centre, in Kuala Lumpur.

Also present were African ambassadors, High Commissioners and university lecturers.

The event was jointly organised by the African Students' Society in Malaysia and Umno Youth.

Dr Mahathir said he could not understand why some African countries, despite having huge reservoirs of natural resources, were poor.

"Having resources alone is not enough. You must have the ability to extract and exploit.

"You must learn to do it or else others will come and exploit. This has already happened and is still happening. We must be the masters of our own destiny," he said.

Dr Mahathir said unlike political independence, which could be achieved through various means such as negotiations, wars and subversion, economic independence was a different case altogether.

Great discipline is needed to achieve economic independence.

"We have to give priority to the needs of our country and people. If we can achieve that discipline, then that will be the beginning of the achievement of economic independence," he said.

The Prime Minister said political popularity alone would not help develop a nation. It must be combined with the ability to administer it.

Malaysia, he said, had adopted the Look East Policy as it felt that Japan, whose industries were destroyed in World War II, had progressed beyond everyone's expectations within a short time.

Dr Mahathir said the West had also condemned the close co-operation between the Japanese public and private sectors.

"We in Malaysia think otherwise. We felt it was a great idea. That was how we launched the Malaysia Incorporated concept, which also proved to be successful," he said.

He said Malaysia believed in helping and prospering other countries, including those that were already prosperous."

(END)