

22/06/2001

Wake-up call for Malays (HL)

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad delivered a wake-up call for the Malays when he told them to overcome their weaknesses, defy stereotypes and never to forget the history of their struggle and strength.

In a speech described by Umno leaders and delegates as "one of the most blunt and direct", the Umno president also told the Malays to attain excellence in education and Information Technology.

Dr Mahathir, who is also the Prime Minister, said this when opening the 55th Umno General Assembly at the Merdeka Hall of the Putra World Trade Centre here today.

He told the Malays to be fearless, diligent, confident and wise in this era that is full of challenges they had never before been faced with.

Dr Mahathir said that contrary to their belief, the Malays could vanish from the earth or become slaves like in the colonial days, if they were not prepared to work hard, not prepared to seek knowledge and wisdom in this age.

He said the likelihood was more obvious now because the Malays were disunited, had rejected unity because many had become greedy as a race, and even religion was no longer regarded as important as the power struggle by parties and by certain individuals.

He also warned of Malays losing their special rights when globalisation became a reality and walls of the nation were dismantled by foreigners.

"All policies that protect the special rights of Malays as sons of the soil will be challenged.

"Democracy, equal rights, meritocracy and human rights will be used to destroy the special rights of the Malays," he said, adding however that there would be Malays who would betray and support such foreigners' attacks on the Malays.

Dr Mahathir said the Malays were not convinced they could defend themselves, maintain their rights if they did have the strength to be self-reliant and could not live unless spoon-fed by others.

"Chances are we will only remain a name in history," he said.

He said the Malays apparently have not learned much from their history. The Malays easily forgot their history.

On the contrary, he said they love to colour their own history with legendary stories for their ego, to comfort and pride themselves in legends which they had created.

He said the Government had implemented the New Economic Policy and made other efforts to ensure a meaningful participation of Malays.

"Unfortunately, after more than 30 years of trying, we have yet to own 30 per cent of the country's economy or wealth for the Bumiputera."

The Government will be urged to try further, establish a variety of programmes, set up more funds for this and that.

"After 43 years of trying, after billions of ringgit allocated, after several banks and a variety of funds were established, today the achievement of Malays in trade and industry is still low.

"We have not moved our business from the sidewalk to a concrete shop. New townships in Malaysia do not reflect the multi-racial society in Malaysia. In the old towns, many Malay urbanites comprise of squatters," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Malays were not stupid, not unwise, not

unintelligent. "They are at par with other races. What others can do, so too, can the Malays. But if we are not prepared to work, then it is impossible for us to expect results.

"We have to make an effort, be hard working, strive hard to seek knowledge and all skills, hold strongly to good values and reject all sins and practise good deeds to improve our performance.

"Those who are usually bed-ridden find it difficult because they have weak legs and are headache-prone. If we want to be independent, we must stand on our feet, not rely on others and go begging.

"If possible, do not accept help. If you accept, then reciprocate accordingly. This is definitely more dignified than being ungrateful," he said.