

Young Malaysians urged to continue development struggle

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THE Prime Minister reminded young Malaysians not to be carried away by the idea of change for the sake of change.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said change can be disruptive to the nation's development and warned the youths to be careful not to fall into the trap of changing.

While admitting that the country is not without its own serious problems, such as threats to national unity, imbalances between races and signs of extremism, the Government had adopted various strategies and policies to resolve these.

"There is no perfect alternative or perfect solution. The alternatives and solutions themselves will soon be condemned as implementation shows up their imperfections.

"Re-engineer by all means, shift the paradigms and entertain brilliant new ideas, but remember today's much-criticised ideas and policies were yesterday's perfect ideas," he said at the launch of the Pro-

muda Lecture Series: "Perspectives from the Past, Paradigms for the Future".

Dr Mahathir added that the developments achieved to date could be threatened by the lack of struggle on the part of the young generation to continue the efforts.

"The NEP designed to reduce the imbalances in economic development between the races has achieved minimal success, not from want of effort on the part of the Government but from the tendency to seek the easy way out on the part of the Bumiputeras.

"They have become totally dependent on the Government," he said.

He said that although the Bumiputeras had achieved close to 20 per cent share of the economic wealth of the country, the Government will continue with its affirmative action to reach the target of 30 per cent.

In his speech, the Prime Minister also addressed the issue of racial unity and harmony, which could be threatened by a resurgence of old distrust and

dislike.

"There are now people demanding that no efforts be made to bring people of different races, especially the younger people, the people of the future, together," he said.

On the call by some quarters to set up an Islamic state, Dr Mahathir pointed out that Malaysia is already an Islamic nation by virtue of the fact that Islam is the official religion and the titular heads are all Muslims.

"They are mistaken, of course. The majority of the Malay Muslims are not so enamoured with their kind of Islamic state nor are they keen on a religious rebellion against the Government," he said.

During a question and answer session, Dr Mahathir called on the young generation to insulate themselves against being complacent.

"The moment you start being complacent, you start regressing," he said.

He also said that the Government had succeeded in overcoming the adverse effects of the 1997-98 financial crisis to

the extent that many local companies were saved from being sold to foreigners.

"In other countries, they allow companies to be sold at firesale prices, but in Malaysia we don't allow such things to happen.

"The Government decided to go in and do something, either bailing them out or giving them money or taking them back. What we did was in the best interest of the country," he said.

Bernama reports: Dr Mahathir signed the letter of undertaking of good conduct before the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Syed Putra Jamalullail at Istana Negara in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

The signed document was certified by the King.

Present to witness the ceremony were Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Cabinet ministers, who signed their letters of undertaking of good conduct before the Prime Minister in Putrajaya later in the day.