

PM praised for his vision in education of Malays

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MALACCA, Tues. The imbalances in the country's population and education opportunities for the Malays gave rise to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's farsightedness in the education sector.

Former educationist, Professor Datuk Dr Awang Had Salleh said Dr Mahathir had written about the matter as early as the 1960s when he noted how education would change the future of the Malays.

"In one of his writings, he stated: A comprehensive educational programme specially for the Malays should be launched immediately the kampung folks must be made to realise that the salvation of their children and their race lies in education."

Awang added that Dr Mahathir also felt that the reason why Muslims were backward was because they were only thinking about seeking knowledge to practice the religion and not appreciating the knowledge.

"He felt that there had to be a paradigm shift in Islamic education and this led to the formation of the International Islamic University to produce all-round Islamic students who are excellent in their respective fields and at the same time exemplify the idealisms, values and ethics of Islam," he added.

Awang said Dr Mahathir felt that there was a need to change the education system as it was too dependent on the British system.

"That was why he adopted the Look East policy in the early 1980s which was directed at widening the scope of education by also learning from the Japanese experience and adopting it to Malaysia's needs."

Universiti Utara Malaysia vice-chancellor, Prof Datuk Dr Fawzi Basri placed Dr Mahathir on par with the Indian father of independence Mahatma Gandhi and former Indonesian president, Soekarno.

He said all three men, with their own unique ideas, had helped shape their countries' image in the eyes of the world.

He said while Gandhi propagated his non-violence philosophy and Soekarno his neutral world idea, Dr Mahathir had captured the world's attention with his ability to develop Malaysia based on his own way.

"Dr Mahathir's success is not for himself or his family but for us Malaysians," he said when presenting his paper on Dr Mahathir's thinking on the Malays.

Fawzi said Dr Mahathir should be a role model for Malaysians, especially the Malays, as he had never been confrontational when putting forward his ideas.

"He believes in diplomacy and concrete debate when trying to convince others. As such, Dr Mahathir had successfully promoted the image of the Malays and Islam in the eyes of the world," he added.

Meanwhile, Datuk Seri Dr Zainul Ariff Hussin of the Prime Minister's Department when presenting his paper on Dr Mahathir's Vision 2020 concept, said Vision 2020 was a reflection of Dr Mahathir's concern and efforts to inculcate positive culture among Malaysians. "This is a result of what he had seen during his countless visits overseas," he said. Zainul Ariff said in propagating Vision 2020, Dr Mahathir had also continuously emphasised the importance of knowledge as he believed development would not come without knowledge.