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Mahathir-Vision

DR M TELLS YOUNG MALAYSIANS TO DO THEIR BIT TO ACHIEVE VISION 2020

KUALA LUMPUR, March 6 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has told young Malaysians that the Vision 2020 to make Malaysia a developed country by the year 2020 can be achieved but it is not going to be easy.

He said the young people who were going to inherit the country must realise and appreciate this responsibility and do their bit.

"Vision 2020 will not be a success if only a segment of the community achieves developed status, if only a part of the country progresses," he said in his keynote address "Realising Vision 2020: Where Do We Stand Today?" at the launching of the Young Professionals Chamber Malaysia (Promuda) lecture series here today.

Dr Mahathir said for success to be meaningful all the people in every part of the country must gain from developed status for the country.

"Because of this we cannot apply a uniform plan or single strategy. We have to focus on the capabilities of the different segments in order to benefit from the plan and the development," he said.

He said the government was encouraged that Malaysia's young people were concerned enough to begin thinking about the future.

"This is a good sign. And I am sure this is going to result in the desire to achieve greater things than those achieved by our forebears and ancestors," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the stability of country has made it the best developed of the developing countries and it makes possible the achievement of Vision 2020.

He said the first eight years of the Vision 2020 effort were great years with the country's economy growing by more than eight percent per annum.

However, in 1997-1998 came the attack on currency, its devaluation and the collapse of the stock market but we overcame this assault and again grew at eight percent plus in 2000, he said.

"But the US recession and the Sept 11 attack undermined our efforts. We still have 18 years more to go before the target date.

"Can we do it? Can we make up for the delays, and can we insulate ourselves against future uncertainties?" he asked.

Dr Mahathir also said that Malaysia today is a model of inter-racial tolerance and unity and the whole world marvels at the achievement.

"Even those races originally from countries where racial enmity is prevalent are able to work and play together in Malaysia," he said.

He said despite attempts by the government party to reduce racial politics by having a coalition of race-based parties and government by consensus, the racist appeal of the opposition has retarded the progress towards integration.

"Then there is this so-called demand for an Islamic state. Actually Malaysia is already an Islamic state because the official religion is Islam and the titular heads are all Muslims and Muslims can practise their religion without hindrance," he said.

He said an Islamic state permits the practice of other religions and so the Malaysian constitution defends the rights of non-Muslims to their religion.

Dr Mahathir said all these have been agreed to by the leaders of all races and religions at the time of independence and no one should question

the status of race or religion, language or culture of Malaysia.

-- BERNAMA

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