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Dr M: I failed to change Malays

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said one of his biggest regrets in his political career was not being able to make Malays change.

Malays, he said, still did not want to work hard to improve themselves and preferred to continue to depend on the Government.

They wanted to be given subsidies and awarded with special privileges although all kinds of help had been given to them, including in education and business, he added.

Their attitude, he said, made him frustrated as to him, special privileges were not noble but something that were insulting and shameful.

"I failed to achieve the most important thing - how to change Malays," he said, adding Malays had not changed the way he wanted them to.

He said this in an exclusive interview with Mingguan Malaysia which was published today. He was asked how he saw Malays today from 21 years ago when he took over Umno's helm.

He, however, said Malays could achieve more if they overcame the three biggest problems that were hindering them: not prepared to work hard, study hard and do things seriously.

He said confidence was all that they needed.

He said although there were those who had achieved success, Malays in general were still lagging compared to the other races.

"The reality is that we could not achieve our objective, that is, the New Economic Policy.

"Although there are several Malays who are successful in business or as professionals, generally there is not much difference in attitude or the values that they uphold," he said.

He said Malays should ask themselves what they should do to improve their lot.

"I have shown (them) what they should do, but they still want the crutch, the subsidies and privileges," he added.

Citing examples, he said Malay male students were lacking in interests to seek knowledge while in business, there were more people who wanted licences and government contracts for them to sell to others than those who were serious in handling the projects themselves.

He also said that one of the factors hindering Malays from progressing was politics.

He said it was common for some people to threaten not to support the Government or resort to politicising something good that the Government intended to implement.

"For example, for a long time I have asked our people to learn English, not for the purpose of replacing Bahasa Malaysia.

"But this was turned into a big issue until it could not be carried out," he said.

He named Malay nationalists and some in Umno as among those who did not understand the reason for the move.

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