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Dr M: Malays must learn to compete

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - At a closed-door meeting with Umno divisional leaders at the party headquarters today, Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Malays must learn to compete with others without the backing of any special privileges.

He said if the Malays wanted to survive in the borderless world, everyone had to have their individual strength and not depend on the protection they normally received from the Government.

A division leader said Dr Mahathir stressed the need for Malays to be ready and prepared to face the eventuality of losing their protection.

He quoted Dr Mahathir as saying:

"It is all right as long as we have the protection, but preparation for not having it must be made from now."

He said Dr Mahathir wanted the Malays to start equipping themselves to compete with others, as failing to do so might render them vulnerable to oppression and re-colonisation.

A State leader said the advice was for the Malays to fend for themselves without being propped by the Government.

He said Dr Mahathir pointed out if the Malays still wanted to depend on the documented provisions (the Constitution), such papers were useless if the Malays were weak.

"Dr Mahathir said the Malays cannot simply rely on the provisions with all the stipulated agreements and contracts as they will not protect them."

He said Dr Mahathir further added that the one thing which would protect the Malays was their ability.

A Wanita leader said from her understanding, Dr Mahathir wanted the Malays to take stock of themselves and realised their independence could be lost within a short period.

"Dr Mahathir warned that after 40 years of independence, he can foresee another attempt to re-colonise the country," she said.

"He asked the Malays to think back on whether there is a need for them to retreat and hide behind the privileges, hoping that they will protect them despite the privileges coming to an end one day," she added.

Another Wanita leader said during the two-hour briefing the party president also spoke on his recent trip to Luxemborg and his hope that Malaysia could emulate Luxembourg's success as a small but rich country.

Using Luxembourg as an example, she said Dr Mahathir pointed out there was nothing that other races could do that the Malays could not.

"He also explained the reasons why Malaysia continues with its Look East Policy."

Later, at a Press conference, Dr Mahathir said the briefing was to explain to the delegates on matters related to the debates which would be held during the assembly.

"I cautioned them to take into consideration the environment around them when they debate on certain issues."

Dr Mahathir said he also explained to the delegates the many challenges they had to face such as globalisation and the borderless world and their implications on Bumiputera privileges.

On whether he used overly harsh words when discussing the Malay plight in an exclusive interview with Mingguan Malaysia published last Sunday, Dr Mahathir said those were not harsh words but words of advice.

In the interview with the newspaper, Dr Mahathir was quoted as saying that his biggest regret in his political career was not being able to make the Malays change.

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

He said the Malays wanted to be given subsidies and special privileges although all kinds of help had been given to them, including in education and business.

On the reaction of the Malays after reading his interview, Dr Mahathir said he could not predict what people would say and how they would react.

"Different people react differently. It is up to them to assess whether I am doing something good or otherwise."

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