

Decolonise mindset, says Mahathir

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JOHOR BARU: Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday the mindset of certain Malaysians must be decolonised to remove the biggest hindrance to national development.

Accepting an honorary doctorate in management and engineering from Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) here, he said that when the government planned a viable project, there was criticism not only from Europeans and their media but also from Malaysians whose mindset had been colonised.

"In fact, after independence, our mindset should no longer be colonised. But it appears our colonial mentality cannot be wholly discarded. Many of us still do not believe in our own capabilities," he said.

The doctorate was presented to by UTM chancellor Sultanah Zanaiah of Johor.

Mahathir said many still believed "that Europeans were more capable than us" and they considered moves to turn a developing country like Malaysia into a fully developed nation as mere day-dreaming.

It was true there could no longer be direct colonial rule but they could colonise through new ways by making use of certain Malaysians, who have yet to free themselves from the clutches of colonial thinking, as tools.

He also reminded certain local non-governmental organisations

(NGOs), created by the colonial nations to support foreign NGOs which did not wish to see this country become developed, not to become their tools.

Development projects such as Putrajaya, Cyberjaya, the North-South Highway, the electric train double track project, Penang Bridge, Petronas Twin Towers and KL International Airport were all labelled as mega projects, he said.

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These projects were opposed by the local NGOs and, at times, by sections of the local media. And the media of former colonialists cheered loudly because their colonial mindset had become so effective.

"If we free ourselves from these clutches and colonial mindset and ponder about a Malaysia without these projects, which have been labelled as mega projects ... what else then will we have," he asked.

"Imagine a Malaysia without all these development projects, what

else will be there to differentiate Malaysia from other developing nations? Surely, there will be none."

Mahathir said the government had also not neglected the rural areas, which were equipped with roads, electricity, water, schools and clinics.

He stressed that Malaysia was no bankrupt or beggar which had to seek help from others to develop these mega projects.

Malaysia's financial position was very much stronger than that of most developing nations and even that of some developed countries.

"No doubt we should study every project that we want to put up and give our views without saying mega this and mega that. We should not echo the views and the words of foreigners, particularly our former colonialists," Mahathir said.

"We should resort to our own thinking and evaluation based on our means and our needs."