

DR M RELATED REPORTS
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AGRICULTURE SECTOR TO BE REVITALISED, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 30 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said Malaysia will step up efforts to make agriculture a key sector in its economy as the sector grew by 1.5 per cent during the review period of the Eighth Malaysia Plan (8MP) as a result of increased output of palm oil and food commodities.

The Prime Minister said agricultural export earnings rose by 26 per cent per annum from RM23 billion in 2000 to RM29 billion in 2003 supported by the higher prices of primary and food commodities.

He said the improvement in the export of food commodities was a result of increasing investments in large scale food production and improvements in quality undertaken in the context of the Ministry of Agriculture Incorporated approach.

"In the next two years, the agriculture sector is expected to grow at a higher rate of 2.7 per cent per annum. The growth of this sector will be derived from the increased output of industrial crops, food production and the contribution from new activities," Dr Mahathir said when tabling the motion on the Mid-Term Review of the 8MP in the Dewan Rakyat here today.

He said while the country has yet to reverse its position as a net food importer, it has achieved self-sufficiency in poultry and eggs and near sufficiency in fisheries.

He said the Government has identified fish farming or aquaculture as having great growth potential.

"The Government will intensify efforts to develop new infrastructure, improvement in skills and technologies to promote modern aquaculture. This involves the breeding of a variety of marketable and highly demanded fish and crustaceans," he said.

For this purpose, Dr Mahathir said the Government will accelerate the implementation of the National Seedling Programme and Action Plan for Hatchery Development.

He said the Government will provide support services to encourage investments in the tuna industry by establishing four Tuna regional Development Centres in Johor, Penang, Sabah and Labuan.

The Prime Minister said the Government will also intensify efforts to develop the potentials of biomass and biotechnology products for domestic and export markets.

Programmes to develop speciality natural products such as herbs, spices and medicinal plants on an integrated and commercial bases will be accelerated, he said.

In addition, the National Botanical Garden project will be developed as a showcase for new investment opportunities in the agriculture sector, apart from being a recreational and tourist site.

To boost developments in the agriculture sector, the Prime Minister said more effective enabling technologies will be promoted.

He said among these will be the extensive use and applications of ICT-related technologies and adoption of e-commerce.

In this regard, the agriculture, Technology-Industry-Government-Electronic Revolution or the AgriTIGeR, aimed at enhancing productivity and increasing competitiveness in the agriculture sector, will be extended to more areas including Sabah and Sarawak, said Dr Mahathir.

Under AgriTIGeR, a cost-effective business-to-business supply chain management application and a portal called Agribazaar will be further developed, where the Agribazaar will function as an exchange gateway for agricultural

communities and traders to conduct online transactions.

He said apart from sustaining Malaysia's competitiveness in palm oil "vis-a-vis" other oil and fats in the world market, efforts are underway to develop the country into a competitive food exporter.

More technicians, professionals and entrepreneurs will be trained in modern agriculture practices and skills, he said.

To achieve this aspiration, Dr Mahathir said the National Agricultural Training Centre will be entrusted to plan, coordinate and provide training and skills programmes.

-- BERNAMA

DR MAHATHIR UNDERLINES 10 POLICY THRUSTS TO ACHIEVE BALANCED GROWTH

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 30 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today underlined 10 policy thrusts in the Mid-Term Review of the Eighth Malaysia Plan (8MP) in the government's continuous efforts to achieve a balanced and sustainable growth for the period 2004-2005 to build Malaysia into a united, socially just, resilient and competitive nation.

Dr Mahathir, who will retire tomorrow after leading the nation for 22 years, said that the country has achieved credible economic growth despite being adversely affected by the volatile globe economy during the first three years of the 8MP.

In tabling the motion on the Mid-Term Review of the 8MP in the Dewan Rakyat, the Prime Minister said that the policy focus of the Mid-Term Review is:

- reinforce macroeconomic fundamentals;
- bolster economic resilience to better withstand shocks;
- retool the economy to enhance its competitiveness;
- reactivate private investment in particular local sources to assume its role as the engine of growth;
- venture into new areas of growth;
- accelerate the transition from low technology and labour intensive economy to one that is high technology and knowledge-based;
- increase supply of quality human resources to meet the demands of an economy that is moving to higher value added activities;
- develop a more equitable society to ensure everyone benefits from development;
- promote an exemplary value system compatible with high achievement by all communities; and
- enhance international cooperation for prosperity.

Dr Mahathir, who is tabling his policy speech in Parliament for the last time, stressed that the policy thrusts of the Third Outline Perspective Plan and the 8MP will be continued to address these challenges.

In addition, the Mid-Term Review will build upon the package of New Strategies introduced in May 2003 to address domestic and external problems.

He said that the first three years of the 8MP have been exceptionally challenging for Malaysia due to unforeseen circumstances. It began with the slowdown in the global economy caused by the downturn of the US economy and collapse in world electronics demand.

This was aggravated by the Sept 11 incident in the US in the same year and after a short breather in 2002, the events in the first half of this year, particularly the invasion of Iraq and the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak have again negatively affected economic recovery.

However, Dr Mahathir said that the Malaysian economy was able to recover with growth this year estimated at 4.5 per cent.

During the review period (2001-2003) the economy continued to expand and registered a real gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 3 per cent even though the external factors and the large share of electrical and electronics goods,

which accounts for around 70 per cent of manufactured exports still prevails.

"We should take pride that our per capita income rose by 2.4 per cent per annum from RM12,843 in 2001 to RM14,324 in 2003.

"Measured in terms of purchasing power parity, the improvement in per capita income would be more impressive, growing at an average rate of 3.9 per cent per annum to US\$9,380 in 2003," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that growth was achieved in an environment of stable prices and low unemployment while the external trade position of the country was also strong as reflected by the sizeable surplus in the current account of the balance of payments every year.

In addition, the fiscal deficit remained within prudent limits despite the increase in public expenditure as a result of the government's pump-priming efforts.

The Prime Minister said that the government also managed to reduce the incidence of poverty by providing better housing and basic amenities, particularly to those in the low-income group and improve the quality of life of all Malaysians.

"Although we expect the global economic environment to improve during the remaining Plan period, we must be prepared to meet new challenges that will test our resilience, productivity, resourcefulness and innovative capabilities," he said.

He said that external environment, both politically as well as economically, will continue to be of key concern.

The Prime Minister said that while it is acknowledged that globalisation could contribute towards increase in trade and capital flows across countries, its present interpretation will benefit the rich countries more because the stress is on free trade and not fair trade.

As such, he said that the stress on competitiveness will also benefit their giant corporations.

"We try to change the globalisation agenda through the WTO (World Trade Organisation) but in the meantime we must prepare to compete in an inequitable environment. If Malaysians want to continue to succeed they have to find a niche where they can achieve world quality. They have also to improve their marketing skills so as to gain a place in the value chain," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said that the country would see increased competition from new players in the global market, including China and India, which are fast emerging as attractive centres for investment in the production of goods and services with high technology.

Dr Mahathir, who is Finance Minister, said that the government will continue to pursue sound macroeconomic policies to ensure strong fundamentals, such as low inflation rate, adequate savings, healthy balance of payments, stable exchange rate and prudent fiscal position.

Efforts will also be taken to strengthen economic resilience and developing a more efficient financial sector and capital market as well as improving risk management

DO NOT USE RELIGION TO DIVIDE PEOPLE OF THE SAME FAITH- DR M

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 30 (Bernama) -- The Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, today advised all groups not to use religion to divide the people of the same faith.

He said there was no difference among Muslims in Malaysia hence the question of religion need not be disputed and turned into an issue in relations within the Muslim community.

"In any society even when the people profess the same religion, are of the same race and speak the same language there are bound to be differences as this

is human nature and because of these differences there will be differing opinions."

"However concerning religion, there should be no difference as we are all from the Sunni group and followers of the Imam Syafie," he told Datuk Mohamad Aziz (BN-Sri Gading) during Question Time in the Dewan Rakyat.

Mohd Aziz had asked Dr Mahathir for his parting advice as Prime Minister to the various groups with a view to ensuring lasting national unity.

Dr Mahathir said different opinions apart from that touching on religion could be debated so as to come up with constructive ideas.

"Opinions such as that on policies...on ways of helping Bumiputeras, on ways of dealing with non-Muslims...this we can debate together," he said.

Dr Mahathir also advised the non-Muslim opposition."To the non-Muslim opposition...remember we are living in the same country.Malaysia is our country and if we discredit our country, we will only become the victims."

He said the majority of non-Muslims in Malaysia were rational and strongly supported the government's moderation in discharging its responsibility.

Dr Mahathir said because of this moderation there had been no racial riots in this country apart from the one on May 13, 1969.

"Fortunately the Barisan Nasional Government gives equal attention to non-Muslims and non-Malays and this has created harmony in our country even though there are some groups which are not happy over this harmony," he said.

He said the majority of the citizens of Malaysia did not support these groups "and will not support them in 2004 either" (general election?) hence the country would continue to remain peaceful.

Replying to Dr Tan Seng Giaw (DAP-Kepong), Dr Mahathir said Malaysia faced different challenges compared to other countries as its multiracial population had differing opinions.

"While we accept freedom of speech...we also know that if racial sentiments are allowed to take reign the country's stability will be jeopardised and racial riots will break out," the Prime Minister said.

"When riots break out, the fundamental and democratic rights of the people will be lost," he said.

He said controls to prevent racial riots actually shielded democracy and basic human rights.

"Hence when an individual or a small group incites and this leads to riots, they are actually denying the democratic and human rights of the majority," he said.

Dr Mahathir said action taken against the individual or the minority, which might appear undemocratic, was in fact to protect democracy.

"Likewise we do not allow the communist party to contest in the election, which is undemocratic, as we know that if they win they will abolish democracy and set up a dictatorship."

"Hence undemocratic action will have to be taken to protect democracy," he added.

Dr Mahathir said an understanding of democracy and a tolerant attitude among the races would preserve national unity and prevent terrorism and terrorist attacks. -- BERNAMA

MAHATHIR FIRST ASIAN LEADER TO STAND UP TO THE WEST

MELBOURNE, Oct 30 (Bernama) -- A Malaysian-born Australian academic says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is the first Asian leader to stand up and hit back at Western leaders who had a superiority complex.

Adjunct Professor Vin D'Cruz, of the Asian Studies Centre at Melbourne's Monash University, told "The Australian" newspaper's Southeast Asia correspondent, Kimina Lyall: "There were problems in the (Malaysia-Australia) relationship before him (Dr Mahathir), but it didn't have any punch to it. The

punch has come since 1981."

Prof D'Cruz said Dr Mahathir's basic criticism - that Australia had adopted the superior attitude of a colonial power looking down on its brown neighbours - had merit.

Dr Mahathir also believed Australia's relationship with Asia centred on Australia's troubled relationship with its own past.

"The things you hear about Mahathir - he is arrogant, abrasive - that's the language Europeans use to speak about Australians," Prof D'Cruz said, adding that Australia historically dealt with its inferiority complex about Britain by looking down on Asia.

"And then Mahathir came and didn't stick to the model of a dignified Asian leader...he stood up and hit back and we (Australians) thought, 'My God, the man thinks he's superior to us'. No other Asian leader has come out and demanded to stand on an equal footing with Australia."

Another Australian academic, Alison Broinowski, told the newspaper that Dr Mahathir's comments - especially those criticising Australia's treatment of Aborigines and migrants - "wouldn't play if they weren't partly true."

Broinowski, author of "About Face: Asian accounts of Australia", said Australia-Malaysia relations had been marred by an "agenda of insult" for decades.

"Nobody can tell you who delivered the first insult, but everyone knows about it," she said.

Dr Mahathir, in particular, mastered the art of "endless revenge" and had spent much of the past decade revelling in opportunities to get back at perceived and real Australian injustices from decades before.

The newspaper said over the 22 years Dr Mahathir had been at Malaysia's helm, all four of Australia's Prime Ministers (Malcolm Fraser, Bob Hawke, Paul Keating and John Howard) had attempted to repair the relationship, only to become embroiled in his passionate tirades against perceived Australian arrogance in the region.

It said Howard had a rare opportunity for repair soon after his election in 1996, greeting Dr Mahathir on his overnight stop in Brisbane on the way to New Zealand, in a meeting that was billed as a sign Howard could forge friendships with Asia where Keating had failed.

"Within months, those hopes were in tatters as Mahathir milked Pauline Hanson's race debate for all it was worth," the newspaper said.

-- BERNAMA

SINGAPOREANS WILL MISS DR MAHATHIR

SINGAPORE, Oct 30 (Bernama) -- Tomorrow, the man who shaped Malaysia's policies towards Singapore for the last two decades retires as Prime Minister and will pass on the baton to his deputy, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Despite flashes of irritation at Dr Mahathir Mohamad's acerbic rhetoric, Singapore leaders do not underestimate his achievements in shaping Malaysia into one of the world's top 20 trading nations, analysts said.

They have also expressed optimism over post-Mahathir Malaysia and lauded him for having developed "solid foundations" for his successor to build on.

"I think there's a lot of admiration among Singaporeans for Dr Mahathir's vision of a modern, multi-racial Malaysia and courage in pursuing it and, of course, his transformation of Malaysia into one of the most advanced nations in South East Asia," political observer Seah Chiang Nee said.

Many people were particularly full of praise for his actions against racial and religious extremism, his daring battle against feudal Sultans, for English language and "backward" practices of the Malays, he told Bernama.

"It's hard for anyone to emulate without running into trouble," said Seah, a veteran journalist and now Editor of LittleSpeck.com.

But Singaporeans, he said, also "rightly or wrongly see him as having personal adverse feelings against Singapore" which had spilled into bilateral relations in recent years.

"People still remember his reference of "many ways to skin the cat (Singapore)," he said.

He noted that in recent years there had been a sharp deterioration of bilateral ties, erasing many of the diplomatic gains in earlier years.

"Most people I talk to have high hopes that Mr Badawi, after a period of consolidation, offers better chance of better ties," said Seah.

"In a year's time, Singapore will have a new Prime Minister. This leadership change in both territories actually augurs well if both sides grab the opportunities offered by history," he added.

He said not only was Malaysia changing, but Singapore, too. A whole new generation had grown up here with a fresh mindset about Malaysia and other neighbours, he added.

Seah said: "The voters, better educated, better informed, are taking over. The people have changed, the People's Action Party (PAP) has changed, the Members of Parliament (MPs) have changed and so have its leaders."

After covering Malaysia off and on for more than 35 years, Seah, who is also a columnist with The Star, said: "My expectation for the future is tempered but gradually I believe in the common sense of both societies."

Singapore's Prime Minister, Goh Chok Tong, told the Bangkok Post recently that Dr Mahathir "is leaving behind a good ship with good officers and an engine working very well."

As such, his successor, Abdullah, should be able to carry on with the process "without too much difficulty", he said, describing Abdullah as a capable leader whose abilities had been underestimated by observers.

"Most people have underestimated Abdullah Badawi, in my estimation. I think that he has much more than what people think he is capable of," he said.

"I see him being able to lead Malaysia upwards along the develbns

FORMATION OF "MELAYU BARU" SHOULD BE RENEWED, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 30 (Bernama) -- In his parting speech as Umno president to party leaders and members, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the formation of "Melayu Baru" or New Malays should be renewed so that the race could be at par with other communities in the world.

He said the Malays should change their attitude to be more bold, more willing to face challenges and have greater credibility.

"There is still so much more to be done by the Malays in terms of attitude change before they can become an advanced race," he said at a breaking of the fast with the Umno president and deputy president at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC), here today.

He said the Malays could be successful if they changed their values in life to suit the values needed to become a progressive race.

Every Umno member and leader must be determined to ensure that the party achieved success, he said.

Dr Mahathir said the formation of Melayu Baru currently was better because they were more confident of themselves and also more successful.

However, more successes could be achieved if the formation of the Melayu Baru currently were further revised, he said.

They must eliminate the tendency to quarrel, to indulge in power struggle, to practise money politics for position, as well as jealousy.

"If we continue to adopt these practices it is impossible for the Malays to succeed.

"I call on Umno members to forget self-interest, place party interest above

individual interest as it is the party that determines the success of the nation," he said.

"Love Umno....develop Umno," Dr Mahathir said.

He said that they should not destroy the party merely to promote self-interest or that of a particular person.

He said only the party could form the government in Malaysia and not individuals.

As such, he said party members and leaders must ensure that it was the party that succeeded and not individuals.

While appreciating the accolades showered upon him by Umno leaders and members for his contribution to the party and nation, he said seeing the party members working together to bring the party to greater heights and rejecting disputes would be a more meaningful appreciation for him.

"I will appreciate this more than words (of praises)," he said.

Dr Mahathir said besides being diligent, determined and disciplined, the Malays should also feel ashamed if they neglected the party.

"Only the race that knows the feeling of shame will be successful," he said.

He said there were races that were prepared to commit suicide because of shame but Umno did not want its members to commit suicide but to correct their attitude and values in life.

"The success or failure of a race is not based on skin colour but their culture and values in life," he said.

Dr Mahathir thanked all Umno members who had supported him when he was party president and Prime Minister.

"I urge members to give the same support to Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi after this," he said.

Dr Mahathir will step down as Prime Minister and Umno president at 3pm tomorrow.

Dr Mahathir and Abdullah later joined thousands of Umno leaders and members in performing the magrib, isyak and terawih prayers at PWTC.

-- BERNAMA

CHRISTIAN FEDERATION OF MALAYSIA PAYS TRIBUTE TO DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 30 (Bernama) -- The Christian Federation of Malaysia today thanked Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for his personal interest in matters of concern to the Christians.

In a press release issued on the eve of the Prime Minister's retirement, Federation Chairman Rev. Datuk Dr Prince Gunaretnam and Secretary Rev. Dr Hermen Shastri said that in the pursuit of progress, Dr Mahathir did not overlook spiritual and moral values.

"He has always been sensitive to the religious aspirations of the various religious communities and always worked for respect, understanding and peaceful co-existence among the people," they said.

They paid tribute to his transformation of Malaysia "into an economically prosperous country built on the principles of the participation and contribution of all Malaysians to social well-being."

The Christian Federation of Malaysia sent its prayers and best wishes as Dr Mahathir stepped down. -- BERNAMA

UUM CAMPUS COMMUNITY SAD TO SEE DR MAHATHIR RETIRE

SINTOK, Oct 30 (Bernama) -- The campus community of Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), though sad to see Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir step down as prime minister tomorrow, are grateful to him for his contribution to the university, its vice-chancellor, Prof Datuk Dr Ahmad Fawzi Mohamed Basri, said today.

"His contributions to the country and UUM are very meaningful because

without Dr Mahathir, Sintok, which was formerly a communist haunt, would not have become the centre of knowledge which has produced 33,725 graduates," he said.

The university was very proud to be chosen by the Education Ministry to set up the Institute on Dr Mahathir's Thoughts, he said at the closing of the Reserve Officers Training Unit's (Rotu) annual training camp in Simpang Wang Perah, Jitra, near here.

He said that to commemorate Dr Mahathir's contribution in establishing the UUM, the university would confer an honorary doctorate on him at its commemorative convocation in conjunction with its 20th anniversary celebration next year.

"Although the people need Dr Mahathir's leadership, at the same time, we must respect his decision (to retire)," he said.

Meanwhile, several parties in Langkawi expressed the hope that Dr Mahathir would continue to give attention to developing Langkawi.

Chairman of the Langkawi Taxi and Hired Car Owners Association Yusof Abdullah believed that Dr Mahathir could play a role after his retirement to enhance Langkawi's image as a renowned island resort.

He said the taxi drivers and owners would remember Dr Mahathir for bringing development to Langkawi and helping them increase their income.

Kedah Malay Businessmen and Petty Traders Langkawi branch chairman Ghazali Mohamed Noor said Dr Mahathir had done a lot to put Langkawi on the world map and hoped that his successor, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, would continue to give attention to the island.

-- BERNAMA

KELANTAN STATE ASSEMBLY RECORDS APPRECIATION FOR DR MAHATHIR

KOTA BAHARU, Oct 30 (Bernama) -- The Kelantan State Assembly sitting has unanimously passed an emergency motion to record its appreciation for and thank Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who will retire tomorrow.

The motion to take note of the deeds and contribution of Dr Mahathir towards Kelantan's development throughout his 22-year tenure as Prime Minister was tabled at the conclusion of the Kelantan State Assembly sitting which ended today and received the support of all 42 of the 43 members of the State Assembly.

Mohamed Saufi Deraman (BN-Galas) was not present at the sitting today.

The motion, tabled without prior notice given, was proposed by Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat and seconded by his deputy, Datuk Abdul Halim Abdul Rahman, and had the agreement of Assembly Speaker Wan Abdul Rahim Wan Abdullah. It was debated for 25 minutes by two Assemblymen namely Norzula Mat Diah (BN-Paloh) and Zulkifli Mamat (PAS-Pulai Chondong).

During the debate, Norzula, who was the sole BN representative at the sitting today, appreciated the open stand of the Kelantan government in tabling the motion and its willingness to openly record its thanks and appreciation to Dr Mahathir despite the differences in their political ideologies.

He hoped the open stand could continue in future to enable such cooperative spirit to be maintained for the benefit of the people.

Zulkifli said PAS acknowledged that Dr Mahathir had made significant contribution to Kelantan although the state was under the PAS rule, such as approving a federal government assistance of RM600 million to the state government to overcome the problem of water supply faced by the people in the state.

"PAS is not a party that is ungrateful. We are a party that can be approached for discussion and consultation," he said referring to the support of all PAS Assemblymen for the motion.

In his winding-up speech, Abdul Halim said everyone should give their

appreciation to Dr Mahathir because the leader who had made much contribution, was "Prime Minister to all the people in the country regardless of party, race and religion".

On Tuesday, Nik Aziz, in his speech when tabling Kelantan's 2004 Budget, also recorded his thanks to Dr Mahathir who had helped a lot in resolving the problems of the people and in implementing development projects in the state. --
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