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Mahathir-Roots

DR M REMINDS PEOPLE NOT TO FORGET THEIR ROOTS

KUALA LUMPUR, July 18 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has reminded Malaysians not to forget their roots although the country has made progress.

The Prime Minister said that only by remembering their roots and their past would they be able to chart their future direction.

"We have moved forward a bit, but do not forget our roots because if we forget where we came from, we would not know where we would be heading," he said at the 'Malam Darul Aman' dinner organised by the Sultan Abdul Hamid Old Collegians' Association (SAHOCA) of Alor Setar, Kedah, here tonight.

Dr Mahathir said forgetting one's roots could also cause one to be backward because the way forward would not be clear then.

"Maybe we move backwards because we do not know that that is the back, and that is why sometimes some of us are a little bit lost because we do not look to the back," he said.

He said the people should be thankful because the life of children now was far better than that of previous generations.

"Previously there were plenty of problems. The number who could enter schools was also not big. Those who entered GES (now Sultan Abdul Hamid College) together with me numbered only 30 out of 20,000 people in Alor Star.

"Nowadays all can enter schools, can reach universities. If you don't have money, there is scholarship," he said.

Recollecting his first day in Standard One, Dr Mahathir said he and his friends had to sit on the floor because there were no chairs.

"But now if you ask children to sit on the floor, parents will show up in school (to protest) and letters will be sent to the Education Minister," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said that during his schooldays, students did everything themselves, including keeping their classrooms clean and tidy because there were no hired workers.

They did all those things without complaining, he said.

The Prime Minister said the progress achieved by the country was not only enjoyed by the younger generation but also by government pensioners.

Pensioners could still enjoy the benefits they received in service, such as an increase in pension when there was a salary increase and bonus when the government paid civil servants bonus, he said.

Dr Mahathir said he was glad that despite the hardship, he succeeded in pursuing further studies to eventually become a doctor and then Prime Minister.

"Now I have been the PM for 21 years. That's enough. So, in October I will be stepping down.

"Many people asked, 'So what will you do? Sleeping, I replied'," he said.

In a lighter vein, Dr Mahathir said it was fun to be Prime Minister because his duties were only to make decisions while others would carry them out, like building the Petronas Twin Towers.

"That is the best part of being Prime Minister. I don't have to do anything; others will do it but I get the credit," he said.

-- BERNAMA

NM ABG YBY