

06 MAR 2003

Abdullah-Mindset

M'SIANS MUST CHANGE MINDSET TO ACHIEVE VISION 2020, SAYS ABDULLAH

PETALING JAYA, March 6 (Bernama) -- Malaysia cannot achieve Vision 2020 unless its people change their mindset, attitude and mentality, Acting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

He said that building a better Malaysia means being better Malaysians and if the people cannot step up to this challenge, "we will almost certainly be poor Malaysians who are left behind".

"Realising Vision 2020 requires us to push ourselves in ways we have never imagined, it requires us to come to terms with our shortcomings, honestly and openly," he said in his keynote address entitled "Competing For Tomorrow" at a talk organised by the Oxbridge Society of Malaysia here.

Abdullah said that Malaysians should not hide behind the exuberance of short-term success or inflate on self-importance. However, he said, they should build their confidence to help the nation achieve its vision.

"Confidence can be easily misplaced and abused. When we are lulled into a false comfort zone, we become oblivious to many things that need to be done. We should avoid introspection and dismiss criticism, we must not live in such a state of denial," he said.

Abdullah said that his vision for Malaysia is Vision 2020, which was articulated by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in 1991.

He said that the Vision pushes the country towards development and prosperity, yet calls for advancement to be tempered with justice, values and compassion.

"Dr Mahathir's vision has become my vision and the vision of all Malaysians. We need not dream another dream," he said.

He said that Malaysia had seen its destination but its road map had yet to crystalise.

"We want to be a fully developed economy but the global economy becomes more volatile and unpredictable. We want to create a 'bangsa Malaysia' yet our children are growing apart.

"We want to be a mature and liberal society but signs of intolerance and exclusion are beginning to emerge. We want to foster a scientific society but yet we remain consumers and not creators of technology," he said.

He said that if Malaysia were to achieve Vision 2020, the nation and its people must compete and work hard to achieve it.

"It will require changes in the way we do things and in the way we manage our country. It necessitates a more heightened level of commitment from all segments of the society.

"It calls for sacrifice from all communities and courage to see beyond our respective communal prisms and most importantly we need to think differently," he said.

He said that while the country had planned its Vision well, the question now remained if the nation was able to execute its plans effectively.

While there had been successes, he said, there were also projects which have yet to take off while some have become too embarrassing to mention.

He said that the malaise affecting Malaysia that may jeopardise the country's way forward is the case of having first world infrastructure and third world mentality.

"From poor execution and inept management to shoddy maintenance and appalling customer service, Malaysia is in danger of possessing the

hardware but little software," he said.

Abdullah said that this mentality not only affects the public and the private sector but the society in general.

He said that as an example, in the World Competitiveness Report 2002, Malaysia was ranked seventh in the world for infrastructure planning, 13th in bureaucracy hindering business and 24th in customer satisfaction.

"Another example that many of you will be able to relate to is service standards. In a prestigious ranking of service for Asian hotels, only one Malaysian hotel makes the list out of the 56 local hotels nominated," he said.

He said that to operate a hotel in Malaysia, a businessman needs approximately 64 separate approvals every year from multiple agencies which "surely can be streamlined".

"We are also aware of the excruciating delays at the Land Office with six months or more being the norm for a simple approval for the transfer of land. You can image what that does to the liquidity of private assets. Loan documentation in Malaysia can take months, when international benchmarks are measured in days," Abdullah told about 500 guests who attended the talk.

-- BERNAMA

SR AHH RM