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NAM-Mahathir (Instability)

SOUTH COUNTRIES MUST TACKLE POLITICAL INSTABILITY, GRAFT, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

PETALING JAYA, Feb 23 (Bernama) -- South countries still grappling with poverty and economic woes must stamp out political instability and corruption, the two obstacles to wealth creation, if they want their business activities to grow and economies to prosper, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Malaysian prime minister said that autocracy and even democracy did not guarantee stability but rather, it was their practitioners who could bring good to their countries.

For instance, he said, a benevolent and caring autocrat could do wonders to develop a nation while on the other hand, a democracy with numerous bickering political parties could disrupt the system.

"Clearly, it is not the system that counts, it is the practitioners of the system," he said at the NAM Business Forum here on the sidelines of the 13th Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit.

As for corruption, it was the degree of corruption that determined the success or otherwise of a government's ability to develop the economic potential of a country, he told the 1,000-odd delegates.

Where corruption was openly accepted as a way of life, no country could develop and prosper, he said.

He also criticised the lobby system, where fees were paid to lobbyists who had access to decision-makers.

"Those who can afford the most influential lobbyist get favours which are denied to others. In the end, it is not good governments that democracy delivers, but governments which offer bribes and accept bribes," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that for most, it was what they got personally that mattered, not the development of the nation and the well-being of the people.

He said that for the time being, democracy offered the South the best political system.

"But we need to know how to manage it, use it in order to have a good government and political stability. We want political stability because it is good in itself. But we want it more because it can help prosper our country," he said.

-- BERNAMA

MR SHY JK