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Dr M: Nation will suffer if corrupt leaders are voted in

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Corrupt leaders will not give priority to their people; instead, they will take care of themselves first, former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

But if people allow themselves to be bought, corrupt leaders will be voted in. Eventually, he said, this practice would affect everyone in the community and destroy the country.

Speaking at a seminar entitled Melayu Dalam Bahaya, Dr Mahathir said during his tenure as Umno president, he was aware there were Umno members who spent large sums of money to buy votes.

But when he sought evidence of this at the party's supreme council meeting, nobody said anything.

The only way to stem money politics was to reveal the culprit, he said, at the one-day seminar organised by Secretariat Melayu Muda.

Deputy Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin, who spoke earlier, urged Malays to open their eyes, accept reality and be prepared to compete on the global platform.

He said there were no subsidies, quotas and affirmative action policies at the global level, hence "all races have to compete on a level playing field".

"So, let's stop making excuses for ourselves and accept the fact that we are lagging behind in some areas. Unless we overcome this, we will always be left behind," he said.

Khairy said even at the national level, Malays were second to others in areas like education.

Yet, education played a crucial role in strengthening the country's economy, he said.

"The Government recognises this. More than 20 per cent of the national budget is allocated to education.

"No one," he said, "can say the Government has not done enough.

"Yet, Malays frequently complain that there are insufficient facilities for everyone - which is untrue," he said.

He listed three factors preventing Malays from excelling in education.

The first was the absence of a culture which encourages a love for knowledge.

"Many of our youth," he said, "do not like to read. When they do read, they only pay attention to what is given to them in school."

The second factor, said Khairy, was the "couldn't-care-less" attitude.

"In a Chinese school, if a hall was needed, parents, teachers and students would work together to raise funds to build the hall. But this does not happen in our community."

Khairy said the third and most important factor was the unwillingness to learn English. He said many Malays seemed to have developed a phobia or "allergy" towards learning English.

"At the recent Umno general assembly, some delegates said countries such as Italy, France, Japan, Korea and Germany were economic giants, despite the fact that many of their people did not speak English.

"This is true but I am sorry to say this is a bad excuse. Their economies and technologies are way ahead of ours. It is not a fair comparison. Of late, even countries like France have begun encouraging their people to learn English," he said.

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