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Dr M: Seven qualities of a good leader

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PUTRAJAYA: Aspiring leaders who resort to unethical ways and even violence to become a leader should be rejected outright, says Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The former prime minister told an undergraduate conference here yesterday, anyone wanting to be a leader could try to acquire the right qualities but he may not succeed, adding that how he handles his failure will also show whether he had the qualities in the first place.

"There are perhaps a thousand people in Malaysia with good leadership qualities but they are never going to make it, simply because the circumstances are not propitious for them."

On the other hand, he said, there may be people with poor leadership qualities but they may become leaders because leadership appears to be thrust upon them.

Mahathir outlined seven attributes of a good leader.

They are:

- » **A good leader** may not be humble but at least he should not be boastful.
- » **He must** be prepared to accept responsibilities but should not be too pushy and insist on taking the lead.
- » **He should** not seek to blame others for failures but to admit his own culpability. He should not point fingers or seek scapegoats.
- » **He should** be modest and not seek praise and glory.
- » **He should** know how to handle his followers as much as his superiors. He must be sensitive to the sensitivities of others.
- » **He should** be willing to do what he expects others to do. He should uphold the slogan of "leadership by example".
- » **He should** be learned and more intelligent at least in comparison to the people he leads.

Mahathir said a leader must have ideas on the direction he leads, ideas on the things that he and his followers must do or achieve, and ideas on how

to improve their well-being and their surroundings, and must know how to translate them into reality.

"We cannot always identify the good leaders early enough so that we choose the right one," Mahathir said.

"The German people who chose Hitler did not know what kind of leader he would turn out to be.

"On the other hand, leaders who turned out to be good had great difficulty winning the support of the people initially.

"Even the Prophet of Islam was stoned by the people of Taif when he started preaching the religion of Islam."

Mahathir also said no matter how people try to show the qualities and characters of a good leader, it would still not guarantee that they would not make mistakes.

"And similarly, no matter how much we learn about the qualities which make a good leader, it is still possible for us to choose the wrong one."

- Bernama