

'WORK HARD TO RESTORE DIGNITY'

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Malays cannot depend on govt help to stay ahead, says Dr Mahathir

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AT a congress held to uphold the dignity of the Malays here, Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad renewed his calls for the Malays to work hard instead of depending on government assistance to restore their honour.

He lamented that dignity was not accorded by expecting help from others, but through accomplishment if the Malays wanted to stay ahead in the country.

"On many occasions, we will start the event with *doa* (prayers) seeking protection, blessing and many other things from Allah. We, however, should remember that God will not provide assistance unless we work hard to improve our fate. This is enshrined in the Quran.

"I have faith in the congress. It was organised to look for ways that we can embark on to improve the community's fate."

Present were Malay leaders comprising members of the cabinet and opposition parties, including Economic Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Azmin Ali, Education Minister Dr Maszlee Malik and Youth and Sports Minister Syed Saddiq Abdul Rahman.

Also present were Pas president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang and Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Annuar Musa. The congress was jointly organised by Universiti Malaya, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Universiti Teknologi Mara and Universiti Putra Malaysia.

Dr Mahathir cited the British colonial era, when foreign workers were brought in as the country's workforce.

Malay rulers at the time, he said, thought the foreigners would return home to their respective countries after completing their work.

"It was not the case after they became complacent and decided to stay in the country. Whether we like it or not, we allowed them (foreigners) to stay here."

He said the nation's workforce was being dominated by foreign

workers because the Malays refused to do work that was considered hard labour.

"Because we are not willing to be employed in work that is *hina* (demeaning), *berat* (heavy), *kotor* (dirty) and dangerous, we let the jobs slip into the hands of others.

"People who took up such work progressed ahead and improved their position in the community.

"During my visit to a construction site of a high-rise tower, I am sad that I could not find people from the same group (race) as mine working there. Are we (the Malays) that *bacul* (coward) to do this kind of work? We must accept that this is happening today or we will not be able to restore our pride and dignity."

The Malays, he said, must realise and change their mindset if they wanted to safeguard their rights and interest.

"If we become a race that can do every kind of work and we work hard for it, rule the country accordingly, no one will look down on us.

"I want to appeal to all of you to not let others take up the work and opportunities."

Dr Mahathir said regardless of the number of congresses held, the Malays could only change their fate if they worked hard.

Even with the government's help, the Malays would be left behind if they refused to make use of the opportunity and strive for better achievements, he said.

Dr Mahathir said the congress should not be seen as racist, but as a platform for the Malays to change their fate and restore their former glory, especially in economic, social and political landscapes.

"We are not here to condemn the Chinese or the Indians, but to find ways to get the Malays back on track and empower them.

"The Malays who attended today's event understood that they have a responsibility to revive their dignity."

He said this when asked on the five resolutions presented by four local universities and one non-governmental organisation, which demanded several matters to be in favour of the Malays.

These included ensuring key ministerial positions go only to the Malays and for vernacular schools to be abolished.

On the latter, Dr Mahathir said while he had heard the resolution, it did not mean it would be implemented.

"There is a demand for single-stream schools, but the government is not compelled to implement it."