

Dr M: Change only the defects
Business Times
June 24, 2011
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A study must be undertaken to identify the defects in the current political system and clean them up, but what has been good must be preserved, says former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad

KUALA LUMPUR: When it comes to transforming the Malaysian politics, change only the defects but keep the good ones, especially those which have kept Malaysia stable for some 50 years, said former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Dr Mahathir said any changes must be done only if they bring benefit to the country and not on the basis of transforming for the sake of it or following others.

He said in any transformation, be it political, economic or socially, it is not the system that determines the success of transformation, but it lies within the people's frame of minds or mindset.

"The mindset must be compatible with the system," he said, adding that a study must be undertaken to identify the defects in the current political system and clean them up, but what has been good must be preserved.

He said this in his keynote address at the CEO Forum 2011 titled "Malaysian politics: Should it also transform with the economic transformation?"

The forum was organised by the Perdana Leadership Foundation.

"We must not do away with the system that has served us well," he said in reference to the ruling-party political coalition.

Dr Mahathir added that any transformation of the country's political system needs to suit Malaysia's uniqueness in being home to three major ethnic races, the Orang Asli in Peninsular Malaysia and over 30 tribes in Sabah and Sarawak.

He noted that the coalition party's ruling has provided stability for half a century with the economy growing between 8 and 10 per cent.

"I think it is not too bad a system ... a coalition government works on the basis that we must give up something to get stability. Maybe not all parties are happy but they are rational about it. If we find one race in Malaysia too happy, then there is something wrong (with our system)."

However, Dr Mahathir said due to Malaysians being increasingly sophisticated now, compared to during his 22-year of premiership, modifications to the political system must be made.

"Today, we talk a lot about race and religion, things that separate us. Race relations between Malaysians today is not so good compared to during my dictatorship. During my

time there was no Obedient Wives Club, but there is one now," he said to a laughing audience.

"Some complained there is no press freedom in Malaysia but the government is helpless in blocking blogs, including mine."

Also present at the forum were Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Tun Dr Ling Liong Sik, Tan Sri Azman Hashim and Tun Hanif Omar.

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