

DPM: Development key to ensure stability, unity
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Plans satisfy the needs of all races, says Muhyiddin

DEPUTY Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin shared Malaysia's experience in managing a multiethnic and multireligious society in his public lecture at a university in Canberra yesterday.

Addressing 200 Malaysian students and expatriates at the Australian National University, he traced Malaysia's history, from the time she gained independence in 1957 to the economic successes that she reaped between the late 1980s and early 1990s. He progressed to how the country weathered the 1997 Asian financial crisis until the present-day global economic climate.

Muhyiddin said the country's success had always been on how the government delivered to its people.

"Political legitimacy in Malaysia has never been solely based on who won more votes in the polls, but more on who could deliver in a way that satisfies the multiethnic and multireligious communities.

"It is about the welding together of different races, religions and localities into one cohesive nation. Fifty-four years down the road, this is still a work in progress."

Drawing parallels, Muhyiddin said Australia and Malaysia shared a common colonial past, but it was fundamentally different in many ways.

One key difference, he said, was on the day Malaysia was formed. At that time, the country was ethnically and religiously polarised.

He said this was a condition, "to a large extent", inherited from two centuries of British rule.

Muhyiddin said the birth of the New Economic Policy (NEP) was a "bold attempt" to eradicate poverty, restructure society and eliminate the identification of race with economic function.

"It is not a crude means to merely transfer wealth from one party to another. And that is why detractors of the NEP have been unable to explain why the period following its introduction is marked by economic growth rather than disaster, as they have predicted."

Muhyiddin said following the global changes to the economic front, it became apparent that Malaysia now had to undergo a transformation, both politically and economically.

"Malaysia has embarked on an ambitious economic, governmental and even political transformation.

"We aim to be not merely a high-income nation by the year 2020, but in line with our Vision 2020, a fully developed one."

Muhyiddin said for Malaysia, development was the critical strategy to ensure stability and unity.

He said contrary to many ill-informed news reports of the day, the Economic Transformation Programme was not a scheme to make the rich become richer.

"The aim is to raise the income of low-earners so they, too, can enjoy the benefits of economic growth."

To achieve a high-income status, Muhyiddin said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak had to adopt new thinking and fresh approaches.

This, he said, resulted in the commissioning of the New Economic Model (NEM), a major reconsideration of sources and strategies for growth. Launched last year, the NEM has made the pursuit of a high-income nation one of its three goals. The other two goals are inclusiveness and sustainability.

"We have to muster and master all our resources if we are to be a high-income nation. The Malaysian economy will have to grow at 6.5 per cent annually for the next eight years if we are to more than double our per capita income to US\$15,000 (RM47,000) by 2020."

Muhyiddin's lecture was part of his four-day working visit here and to Perth.

Later, at a question-and-answer session, Muhyiddin called on the people to put their trust in the country's electoral system, namely the Election Commission, as it was set up to manage elections in a fair and responsible manner.

He said there was never an issue of "manipulation of the votes" as claimed by the opposition.

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