

I have failed as Malays know no shame, says Dr M
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By LEE SHI-IAN

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad lamented that he failed in his 22 years in power as the Malays did not feel ashamed when they failed, whether in examinations or in life.

"I spent 22 years trying to change the Malays, trying to alter the perception that they were lazy, I failed," Malaysia's longest serving prime minister said today.

His comments came after the Education Ministry revealed that two examination papers for a national primary school test had been leaked, forcing nearly 500,000 pupils to resit the papers on September 30.

"In the past, when a Malay was sentenced to jail, the offender would hang his head in shame as it was not something to be proud of.

"But today, when a Malay is sentenced to jail, the offender will walk with his head proudly in the air, smiling as if he has achieved something."

The former prime minister was speaking at the launch of the book "Wahai Melayu" by author Anas Zubedy in Petaling Jaya today.

He cited Mat Rempit or members of Malay motorcycle gangs as an example of Malays who did not feel ashamed about not working hard.

If anyone asks me today, I would have to say Malays are lazy. - Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad

"When they fail, they say we will go and become Mat Rempit. Look at the gender breakdown in our public universities.

"Women make up 70% of the students while men are a mere 30%. What has happened? Is Malaysia lacking in males?

"No, the Malay men appear to feel proud to be Mat Rempit. They do not feel ashamed when they fail in their examinations."

Dr Mahathir said he spent 22 years as prime minister trying to change the mindset of the Malays and turn them around.

"I always tell non-Malays not to think that the Malays are lazy. If anyone asks me today, I would have to say Malays are lazy," Dr Mahathir said.

Another failing among the Malays, he said, was the lack of honesty and integrity, and their failure to handle money properly.

He spoke of his experience running a bakery after his retirement from politics.

"I am operating a bakery and have given many opportunities to Malays to hold management positions.

"Unfortunately, time and time again, honesty and integrity appear to be lacking as there have been staff who keep stealing.

"They do not seem to understand that it is wrong to take what is not theirs, they do not think of the big picture or the long term."

He said he had hoped to change the Malay mindset by introducing the Look East Policy in 1982 because he had high regard for the attitude and determination of the Japanese, to whom failure was "unacceptable".

"Despite the massive setbacks they had suffered, the Japanese refused to yield. They were determined to rebuild their country (after World War II).

"Look at how Japan has risen from the ashes. Their economy is among the top five in the world. This was accomplished with blood and sweat.

"To redeem their honour, the Japanese united and strived to make their country's economy strong until it was among the top five in the world.

"The Japanese feel ashamed if they fail to accomplish what they have set out to do. They take everything seriously."

"In the old days, Japanese commit hara-kiri or seppuku (suicide) if they have failed. This is because failure is unacceptable."

Dr Mahathir also reminded Malays to repay their debts so that they would not be looked upon poorly.

"Unpaid debts not only affects us as individuals, but as a race as well. We do not want other people to look at us and assume we are bad paymasters.

"As Malaysia heads towards 2020, the Malays must work hard to ensure that they are not the poor people of Malaysia," Dr Mahathir said.

"If we fail, we should not blame anyone but ourselves. We have failed because we did not do what was right." – September 11, 2014.

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