

**SPEECH BY TUN DR MAHATHIR BIN MOHAMAD AT THE SEMINAR ON  
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**“Challenges of Youths Today to make the World of Tomorrow”**

1. I would like to thank Malaysian youths of Melbourne and Asialink for this invitation to speak on challenges of youths today, to make the world of tomorrow.

2. It is a very interesting subject and it reminds me of my own youth. I was not too happy then because youths in those days were much dominated by parents and elders. Our world was a very small one, limited to the town of Alor Star and the very few trips to the great city of Penang.

3. We knew nothing about the youths in other parts of the world, there being no television and the cinemas showed cowboys shooting Indians only. I read a lot of British boy's magazines but could not imagine a world full of white people.

4. In school we learnt the history of the British empire but nothing much about the Malay states of the peninsular. We knew nothing about our country then called British Malaya, before the British basically colonised it. The history books told nothing about how the British persuaded the Malay sultans to go on retirement with a big pension, a Rolls Royce car, a palace and a yellow umbrella, so that the British could take over ruling the country. I was even persuaded to be proud of my state of Kedah being a part of the British empire on which the sun never sets. There was no thought about the world of tomorrow, the world in which Malaya would become independent.

5. It took a long time for me to feel humiliated by being subject peoples and not nationals of my own country. That realisation came with the Japanese occupation and then having my country handed to the Siamese as reward by the Japanese for cooperating with them. I realised we the indigenous people of the Malay states had no say in what was done to our country. We were passed around like a plate of curry. The feeling of humiliation deepened. Still we thought that our situation would improve if the British came back.

6. For me at that time the world of tomorrow is the world we see today though I had no way of imagining it then. Thoughts of becoming independent just did not pass through my mind. The world of tomorrow which I imagined during the Japanese period was a return to British overlordship.

7. I have often quoted George Santayana who said; “those who forget the lessons of history will be condemned to repeat their mistakes over and over again”.

8. I did not know much of my country's history in those days so you must excuse me if I repeated its mistake. But the youths of today have easy access to the minutest details of our history and even the world's history. If

you take the advice of Santayana, you will not be repeating the mistakes that we made. It is as easy as that.

9. but no! it is not so easy. In the first place you must acquire the skill to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong in our history. If you cannot then your judgement may be faulty. In that case you may still repeat the mistakes of the past

10. It is also not easy because you now live in a different environment and you will find great difficulty in imagining the environment of the past and the forces which were at work then. Because of this you may not be able to understand why certain things were done in the past which seem to be absolutely wrong. Your judgements in the context of the environment in which you live now may again be faulty.

11. For example the sultans signed the Mac Michael treaties, surrendering their states to the British. There was no real resistance by the sultans, despite the fact that the British failed to honour their pledge to protect the Malay states from attacks by others.

12. Why did they give in so easily? In those days the people were not allowed to be involved in politics. Consequently the sultans felt alone and weak as there was no support coming from their subjects. If they refused to sign, the Brits would simply appoint as sultan someone from among the many pretenders who was willing to sign.

13. It was fortunate that their subjects broke the code and took up politics with a vengeance. With the support of their subjects, the sultans were able to repudiate the treaties. Try to imagine the Malaysia of today if the treaties were not repudiated. It really is not too difficult. Have a look at Singapore where political power and economic wealth is unevenly distributed.

14. I chose this example because you, the youths of today can learn a lot from this particular example. The people, that is you, must understand and be concerned about your country's politics and be able to decide what would be good for you and your future.

15. What can you learn? Firstly feudalism very nearly lost you your country. On the other hand absolute trust and unquestioning loyalty to leaders can also bring disaster to you and your country.

16. The youths of today must be more knowledgeable and discerning so that if you recognise something bad happening you must be brave enough to oppose it. For Malays it is important to remember that you still have a feudal mind and going against your rulers whether hereditary or elected is anathema to you.

17. Loyalty to the leader is essential in order to enable the leader to do his duty. But loyalty must not be absolute. When you see leaders going wrong, clearly wrong then you must curtail your loyalty. Then and then only can you ensure things would go right.

18. On the other hand too much criticisms of the leadership or the government can prevent positive work from being done. A leader or a government needs time to deliver. In some countries they change governments frequently because of real or imagined failures. As a result the government party would be pre-occupied with defending its position that it would neglect the administration and development of the country.

19. As you can see knowing history and past mistake alone is not enough. If the country is not to fail, the people must be well educated, must be able to evaluate a country's affairs intelligently and must be moderate and non-violent. It is not an accident that developed countries manage to make democracy work. Their people are educated and sophisticated and understand the limits of their political system.

20. Remember, there is no government in the world which is sincerely liked by all the people all the time in the country. There will always be people who are always against the government. That is fine as long as the critics are not too powerful. They can serve to remind the government that it must always tread with care.

21. We now live in a globalised world. The affairs of any country will have an impact on many other countries. Dealing with these problems requires an understanding of the new structure of the borderless world the ease of travel and instant communication. All these prevent any country from being an island and isolating itself.

22. The days of empires are over but unless we are careful, a globalised world may result in a new form of imperialism which may be worse than before.

23. We now cannot be safe within our own borders. We may actually be invaded and occupied. We may be forced to have a regime change. We may not have any other form of government than the kind of government advocated by the militarily powerful. we may even be arrested and imprisoned in a foreign country for saying something in our own country that is not an offence but is an offence in that country.

24. Our values and culture may come under pressure to change to be in conformity with what is prescribed by the powerful countries.

25. We live in fear of offending them. Incidentally these countries are the same as the imperial nations which colonised us before.

26. The international media is controlled by the superpowers also. Their reports are invariably biased. They are very critical to the point of running down the countries they don't like. We will get a distorted view of the world and of our own country and we may be trapped into believing and supporting their lies. All these would challenge our capacity to judge.

27. Killing people in order to solve problems with other nations will still be considered legitimate. Where before the contests were between two powerful blocs, now the preference of the big powers is to bully weak nations. Usually the nations would surrender and submit. But now and in the future the

peoples of the defeated countries would carry out their own war of self defense using whatever weapons they may have. Suicide bombers have become common as the peoples of invaded countries have no tanks, armoured cars, warplanes and navy ships. We may be asked to label these defenders terrorists. But the people attacking them are no less terrorists as their bombs and rockets also terrify their victims.

28. However the big powers will find their military success quite useless. Far from gaining access to the wealth of the defeated country or to convert it into a democracy the invaders would have to deal with a prolonged guerrilla war, which they would call the war on terror. Calling these nationalist guerrillas terrorist will not help. The invaders would not be able to exploit the wealth of the defeated or to create a democracy.

29. The big military powers are only slowly realising that powerful weapons cannot defeat people who are determined to save their countries. Witness Vietnam, Afghanistan, Somalia and Iraq. All are fighting against the invaders. The only country the powerful nations have been able to defeat is tiny Grenada in the Carribean.

30. The recent massive financial turmoil in America and Europe has exposed the defects in the international financial and trading systems. The greedy have found ways of legitimately stealing huge sums of money because of this defect.

31. More money have been made by capitalist crooks through their manipulations than the total profits from world trade. All they have to do is to shuffle papers, selling them to each other and conjuring up profits from these deals, profits in billions without moving any goods or supplying any service. Risky mortgages and junk bonds can be sold at huge profits, and the currency trade can be highly profitable at the cost of bankrupting poor countries.

32. Money used to be in the form of metal coins which had intrinsic values. Then paper money was introduced by banks and governments. They used to be backed by gold but not anymore. Now we have no need even for the printed paper currency. Credit cards and debit cards have largely replaced them.

33. But the financiers have gone a step further. All that is needed are entries in bank books which when changing hands would simply acquire a new owner. Transactions are through changes in the names of the owner. No real money is involved.

34. Literally the banks with the connivance of central banks and the governments are creating money out of nothing. The US 700 billion dollars voted by the US congress to bail out banks and other financial institutions which have gone belly-up simply does not exist.

35. With this right to create money, banks can lend more than their capital and the deposits they have taken. There is a limit of course to how much money they can lend but often they would lend more than they are allowed to.

36. These sham money depend entirely on the willingness of the users to accept them. Actually of course they have no value even as waste paper. Yet this is what the international financial system is about. Every now and again there would be a run on the banks as depositors lose confidence. Then, more bailouts.

37. And the CEOs of the failed banks and other financial institutions get huge paychecks and share options. even when their management ends in the bankruptcy of these financial giants, they are paid huge sums as they left the companies or the banks they have destroyed.

38. The international financial system is a sham. Money created from thin air is being lent and huge profits are made by the banks.

39. Globalisation is an invention of the rich western countries. it is designed for them to rape the small countries and nothing more. By disregarding borders and invading with their huge capital, their mining companies, banks and industries they will gain control of the whole economy of a country. In fact they will effectively colonise the country.

40. These things are what we are experiencing now. The future will bring innovations and development which may or may not be detrimental to smaller countries.

41. This is the world of tomorrow that the youths of today will be facing.

42. If you want to make a better world of tomorrow you need to know what is good and what is bad with the conditions and practices prevailing today. You have to figure out what would be the likely direction today's situation and practices will take. If you feel that the direction and practices will make tomorrow's world worse than it is today, you will need to debate openly about what needs to be done.

43. Taking to the streets and demanding for change will not yield any worthwhile results. Worse still if you resort to assassination. But if you acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to predict the likely direction that your country or the world would take, then you can decide whether you should act to influence the course of future history so as to create a better world than we have today.

44. That is the challenge facing the youths of today who will be the movers and shakers of tomorrow.

45. I wish you good luck.