

Right, unpopular decisions

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inaugural session of the Bangladesh-Malaysia Business Forum to a packed Hotel Sonargaon ballroom yesterday.

"Governments cannot always do popular things if they want to govern well. Doing the right thing is often unpopular. Only strong governments with big majorities are capable of doing unpopular right things and still survive," Mahathir said in his speech that was telecast live on a private television channel.

He added, "It is simple enough to make a decision about what needs to be done in order to develop the country," but implementing the decision requires a "great deal" of skill and dedication from the implementors from the prime minister to the lowest rung of the administration".

Mahathir also said Malaysia's low-level of corruption was achieved by sparing no-one, "not even the ministers and prime minister".

Asked about his prescription for the endemic corruption that is crippling Bangladesh, Mahathir said corruption cannot be stopped if everybody "right from the top" are involved in it. He said when senior government officials are involved in corruption, there is no way to stop it.

On Malaysia's ability to deal with the Asian economic crisis in 1997, Mahathir said it was his ability to think outside of "textbook economics" and a strict adherence to national interest that had allowed him to ignore external economic advice that he felt would have "bankrupted the country".

DU honours Mahathir

FROM PAGE 1
uates attired in convocation dresses joined teachers and guests at the colourful opening ceremony of the two-day convocation at the university playground.

Dr Mahathir in his convocation speech urged Muslims to expand their field of learning, not confining themselves only to the knowledge of religion.

"We, the Muslims must not neglect the study of our religion.....but we must try hard to acquire knowledge in all fields in sciences, technology so that we may serve the Ummah and Islam better," he said in the thought-provoking speech.

Neglect in these fields of study has made the Muslims more easily subject to oppression, observed the great Asian leader of the Muslims.

Delivering the speech the architect of modern Malaysia pointed to the difference between rule of law and the rule of justice in a society.

"We need rule of justice, rule of law may not be just and I feel rule of law is not enough," he said amid huge claps from around 8,000 graduates.

Mahathir told the graduates that this is not the end of acquisition of knowledge. "The processes of knowledge acquisition never ends. It goes on throughout the life," he said urging them to contribute to the improvement of society.

Citing the first divine message received by Mohammad (SM) from Allah, he said Islam gives priority to acquiring knowledge.

Recalling the great days of Muslims during the early centuries of Islam, he said Muslims produced great scholars in many fields and

Mahathir recalled that Malaysia's political differences were resolved only by taking a decision that all parties got a "slice of a growing economic cake", rather than "sharing a shrinking cake".

Peace and stability could only be attained by ensuring a fair share of national wealth, he added.

He explained that Malaysia's leadership decided that the only way to industrialise, "was to invite foreign industrial investors to invest in labour intensive industries".

It was at a time when Malaysia had no manufacturing expertise, no capital, no management skills and no knowledge of the markets.

He noted that this policy created so many jobs that the country ran out of labour, which had paved the way for two million foreign workers to work there, including a large portion from Bangladesh.

"It is fairly easy for the government to adopt investor friendly attitude and policies. But the work force must also help to make investments in Malaysia attractive," he warned.

Mahathir said Malaysian workers had in the process became highly skilled and commanded better pay.

"All these changes require a radical change in attitude" of workers, Mahathir said. "Workers need to appreciate the importance of quality."

He also stressed that innovative administrative reform was crucial for Malaysia's progress such as stringent anti-corruption policies, effective and regular meetings of crisis-

management committees, and training.

Infrastructure development by the government and subsequent privatisation, Mahathir added, meant that new towns and economies were sprouting along highways which, in turn, created greater demand for services and utilities.

Chief Guest at the inaugural session, Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman said "Bangladesh may have not been able to attain the desired level of growth but we have not failed." He added that Bangladesh was doing better than India on Millennium Development Goals despite a decreasing amount of arable land and more mouths to feed.

"We also have our political instability," he said, explaining that Bangladesh's political institutions are not supportive of political stability and the parliamentary process has built-in weaknesses.

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan, Commerce Minister Abdul Hossain Choudhury, Malaysian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Ashaary Bin Sani, Bangladesh Malaysia Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Salahuddin Kashem Khan and Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry President Abdul Awal Mintoo also addressed the session.

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina and former president HMEshabd are scheduled to meet with Mahathir this morning before his departure at 10:00am.

Jamaat MP asks police not to harass grenade attack suspect

OUR CORRESPONDENT, SAKHIRA

they excelled in all the fields of knowledge of their times.

He mentioned that the Muslims of the early centuries of Islam went to Greece to acquire knowledge. They translated and studied the works of the Greeks, Persians and Indians and spread the teachings of Greek philosophers, scientists and mathematicians.

"With these efforts, the dark age of the Europeans ended and they began to build their present civilisation. Unfortunately, the Muslims themselves decided to reject knowledge other than of their own religion," Mahathir said.

"The consequence is decline of the Muslims and the rise of the Europeans," he observed.

President Iajuddin Ahmed who is the chancellor of the university, ministers, members of parliament, representatives of the foreign missions in Bangladesh also attended the convocation ceremony.

President Iajuddin urged the graduates to enrich themselves with high moral principles of integrity, conscience and love for humanity to render the desired service to the people. "The nation and the world expect a lot from you," he said.

Vice-chancellor Prof SMA Faiz handed over a crest to Dr Mahathir at the ceremony.

A total of 8,069 graduates, including 4,387 female, will receive certificates while 79 students will be awarded gold medals for their outstanding academic performances by the chancellor today, the concluding day of the convocation.

The chancellor will lead a colourful convocation rally that will begin at 2:00pm today from Curzon Hall.

Early, police arrested and pressed some relatives of Mukul to tell them about his whereabouts. The arrestees were, however, released later.

Sent by Jamaat lawmaker Maulana Abdul Khaleque Mondal, local Jamaat leader Sahid Hasan requested Sadar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Abdul Kader Beg not to harass Mukul's family members, sources said.

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