

PM: Malaysia must overcome anonymity

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THERE is a need for Malaysia to free itself from being an "anonymous" country if it hopes to compete successfully against its more renowned neighbours, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

"The Malaysian problem is how to overcome this anonymity," he said when opening an investment seminar in Kuala Lumpur organised for potential American investors.

He noted that Malaysia is less known to the outside world when compared with its neighbours Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines and even Vietnam.

It might be because of this anonymity that US investments in Malaysia's manufacturing sector totalled a mere US\$121 million in terms of paid-up capital and US\$358

million in terms of fixed assets, the Prime Minister said.

Dr Mahathir feels one of the reasons for this low profile could be that Malaysia was a new country that came into being "without the usual big bang, so quietly that nobody noticed."

"There was no protracted war of national liberation or East-West proxy fight. Consequently we cannot even be notorious like Vietnam.

"Newspeople do not like countries that are calm and peaceful and attains economic growth as a matter of course. Politically too, there is not much to report about Malaysia," he said.

Dr Mahathir said since independence, Malaya then and Malaysia now has been ruled by the same coalition, alliance and later Barisan Nasional,

which won a 4/5 majority in the general election on August 3.

This success had contributed further in irritating newsmen looking for newsworthy media events, he said.

Dr Mahathir stressed that Malaysia does not intend to attract attention by being unstable or unpredictable.

He said Malaysia will continue to maintain the present social and political stability as this is the quality that will attract investors, particularly foreigners, to further help develop the country.

Dr Mahathir is confident potential investors will "fall in love" immediately with Malaysia and its friendly people once they are here and will help spread the name of the country among their business friends at home.