

Sporting boost— for Malaysia Incorporated

1957 - 5 SEP 1957

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — Malaysia Inc was given a boost today with the public and private sectors coming together in a golf and tennis friendly — and the Prime Minister declaring that he was the oldest golfer among those present.

Although he confessed at the outset that he played neither golf nor tennis and as such had “nothing in common” with those present, he had played golf before — during the Japanese occupation.

But, it was the miniature variety which entailed hitting a ball along a wooden ramp. The ball then twirled round the inside of a pagoda and dropped into a hole.

Invariably, it would be a hole-in-one. If not, two shots usually did the trick.

“That should make me the oldest golfer among you,” said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, amidst laughter.

And, as if to emphasise that he had nothing against golf, he gave away some autographed golf balls to the main prize winners.

He said some golfers would thus be able to hit a ball with his name on it in much the same way, as in Japan, where some employers provided dummies of themselves for their employees to hit as a means of giving vent to their grievances and frustrations.

Dr Mahathir was quick to add: “It is all right as far as I am concerned because I will not feel the pain.”

It was in this light-hearted vein that the Prime Minister spoke at the prize-giving cere-

mony at the Saujana Golf and Country Club in Subang where the games were held. But the message was clear — the public and private sectors had to work together for the good of the country.

If, previously, Government officers were reluctant to be seen with members of the private sector it was largely because of fears of being branded as being corrupt.

“But nobody should make accusations against public officials without proof because it creates problems ... it sours relations, makes public servants hold back,” said Dr Mahathir.

It was mainly because of this that civil servants had tended to say “no” as a first reaction to any application for a permit or licence.

Civil servants must approve what they should approve because it was their duty to do so.

The games provided an opportunity for both the public and private sectors to get to know each other, to be comfortable with each other.

And in the spirit of the occasion, one of the private sector golfers was overheard remarking at his table: “In the next round we ought to play for a five per cent reduction in tax rates if the private sector wins and the other way round if we lose.”

His bravado, no doubt, came from the fact that on this the first occasion hosted by the public sector, the private sector teams won — 18 to 15 in golf and 11 to 3 in tennis.