

Dr M takes critics of Malaysia to task

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PORT LOUIS (Mauritius), Thurs. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has taken critics of Malaysia's system of Government to task for being ignorant of the intricacies of life in a plural society.

Many of the detractors, he said, were "armchair critics from developed countries" who failed to appreciate that developing countries had their unique methods of solving problems.

Speaking at a civic reception at the Mahatma Gandhi Cultural Institute here yesterday, he said:

"They have accused the Malaysian Government of being intolerant of some segments of the population.

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"The fact that Malaysia's multi-racial population has managed to live together amicably should invite admiration instead of criticism."

He said the Malaysian and Mauritian societies were similar in that they had both learnt from the mistakes of their colonial past.

"Malaysia and Mauritius should be proud of their record in multi-racial living and not be afraid of criticism from any quarter about justice or liberty in our countries."

He said this similarity and numerous others shared by the two nations should form the ba-

sis of a meeting point for their leaders.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia's establishment of links with Third World countries like Mauritius should be emulated by others so that the developing world could form a united front against challenges from the developed nations.

He said developing nations were forming their own groups and noted that European countries decided to establish a "United States of Europe" in 1992.

Mauritian Prime Minister Sir Aneerood Jugnauth, in his speech, praised Dr Mahathir's pragmatism in dealing with Malaysia's racial and economic problems.

"Malaysia is one of the leading plural societies in the world," he said.

"Your dynamism and vision, your determination and your sagacity are the unalloyed virtues of leadership that have helped Malaysia carve out the image of a progressive nation."

Sir Aneerood acknowledged that cultural pluralism was the cornerstone of social justice and harmony and said freedom was invariably linked to respect for the laws of the land.

"We do not want to imitate the big powers, not because we are a small nation, but because we have our own specificity and it is our responsibility to preserve it at all costs."

He noted that Mauritians could draw inspiration from Dr Mahathir's personal life "which has been an example of the ideals we cherish."

Dr Mahathir, he said, had championed the cause of self-sufficiency, self reliance and respect for self determination despite the difficulties posed by the vagaries of international politics and economics.