

Take pride in economic progress but...

PM: Much more needs to be done

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By A. KADIR JASIN

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is recovering well from a coronary bypass operation, said he was very pleased with the recovery of the Malaysian economy.

He told the New Straits *Times* just before leaving for a three-week holiday abroad last night that every nation-loving Malaysian could take pride in the economic progress and political stability of the country.

Dr Mahathir said loyal Malaysians had once again proved to the prophets of doom that their predictions about impending political chaos and economic disintegration of the country were malicious and **incorrect**.

Sadly, said the Prime Minister, there were Malaysians who were convinced of these predictions. Some had in fact joined them **in condemning** this country at home and abroad.

Now that the recovery of the economy was gaining momentum, said the Prime Minister, every Malaysian, regardless whether he was a politician, civil servant, entrepreneur, factory worker or self-employed, should strive harder to take advantage of the improving economic environment.

"All of us must be prepared to make sacrifices now for a better future," he said in an exclusive interview.

The Prime Minister said there are still so many things to be done to make Malaysia a better place to live in **despite** the **rapid progress** of the last three decades.

"We should concentrate our efforts on them rather than speculating about unnecessary things or listening to rumours," he added.

Dr Mahathir said he had a lot of time to **contemplate** as he was recovering from the operation.

"Among the first things that came to my mind was how **lucky** I am, and all of us are, being Malaysians. In many other developing countries, someone with an illness like mine would have to be flown thousands of miles to a foreign hospital for treatment.

"But in our country today, a coronary bypass is such a common surgical procedure that our doctors and technicians confidently and expertly perform it without much fuss," said the Prime Minister.

Dr Mahathir also said there were so many things Malaysia could do to achieve greater economic progress if only more Malaysians were willing to avoid carping about things and put their shoulders to the wheel and look to the future with confidence and commitment.

He said he would rather be criticised or even condemned for doing things which he believed would be good for the country and the **people** in the long run, rather than being **praised and loved** for doing only the popular things.

"We were condemned and criticised locally and internationally long after we started the national car project. **But** now that Proton Saga is doing well, even winning international awards, very few people care to even say well done to those who worked to make this project a success," said the Prime Minister.

He said he did not seek praise or salutations for what he did.

"I am merely doing what I think is right after consulting my Cabinet colleagues.

"But I think those workers and managers who have put so much effort in making Proton Saga a good car deserve some praise."

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Some workers being misled: PM

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Dr Mahathir said resource-poor countries like Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore had succeeded in their industrialisation plans because they had confidence in themselves

and they acknowledged the good work of their people.

"Unfortunately in our country, even workers are made to feel bad about their **companies** or their employers by those who seek to politicise literally

anything and everything for sectional gain."

Fortunately, the majority of our workers and foreign investors are wise enough to be able to differentiate between truth and lies, he added.