

# 'Ensure economic growth outpaces population growth'

By ZAHARA SHAHRIMAN

MALAYSIANS must strive to ensure that economic growth outpaces population growth to be certain that there will be sufficient wealth for the people, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

Distribution of the nation's wealth should only come from an "enlarged portion of the economic cake", he added.

Speaking at the opening of the 38th MCA general assembly in Kuala Lumpur, he said statistics have shown that by the year 2050, Malaysia's population will reach some 75 million and thus it is crucial that economic growth exceeds the population boom to ensure enough wealth for everyone.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir stressed his point by saying that at the time of independence, the Malaysian economy accommodated 7 million people and if it had not grown to accommodate the present 18.6 million, the country would not have seen any development at all.

"Economic growth can only be achieved if there is political stability, and Malaysians must work hard to ensure this is so," he said.

"With political stability, the nation's

economy has grown tremendously. It is better to share the wealth with everyone than to fight over it, which will only result in riots and instability."

In this context, he urged all quarters to work diligently to ensure the success of the National Development Policy, the Sixth Malaysia Plan and Vision 2020.

Among those who attended the MCA assembly were BN component party leaders, including Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik, Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak president Datuk Leo Moggie, MIC deputy president Datuk S. Subramaniam, Umno secretary general Datuk Mohamed Rahmat and Penang Chief Minister Dr Koh Tsu Koon.

To maintain political stability, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said, it is important that BN leaders enhance their existing cooperation, especially since the opposition will continue efforts to divide the BN component parties.

"The opposition parties realise that as long as the component parties are united and strong, they cannot extend their political influence.

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## Ensuring sufficient wealth for people

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"Therefore, from time to time, they bring up out-of-date and irrelevant issues which they hope to use to confuse the people. We can counter these allegations if we give priority to the national interest instead of self-interest," he said.

He said the BN system is to solve issues through negotiation, and not through demonstration or tension-filled public debates. This, he said, is the country's secret to stability.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said it is the responsibility of all races to ensure that Malaysia becomes a developed nation by 2020. He urged

Malaysians to put all their heart, effort and energy into achieving the target.

He said to ensure harmony among the races, there needs to be a "give and take" attitude which is fair to all sides.

"If one side asks too much for itself, it means that there is no give-and-take. The problem is how to ensure what is fair and what is not? The May 1969 incident occurred because it was deemed fair that the Malays worked in the Government while the non-Malays monopolised the private sector where unlimited

wealth could be obtained.

"The definition of 'fair' in this context was wrong because the Malays wanted a share of the economic pie while the non-Malays wanted participation in the civil service. Since we were very liberal in practising democracy, extremist talk and activities resulted in a very tense situation which led to the 1969 incident," he said.

Nowadays, he said, the Government and people know better about the give-and-take attitude and how much each race can "give and take" in comparison with other races.