

Come for first-hand view, Dr M tells Americans

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From Balan
Moses

NEW YORK, Thurs. — Malaysia has a winning combination for foreign investors in its political stability, pragmatic approach to development and willingness to adapt to the needs of businessmen despite all allegations to the contrary by certain quarters. Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

Addressing the inaugural session of the Malaysia-United States Private Sector Consultative Group here, the Prime Minister said detractors of the country were constantly trying to blacken its image by painting a negative picture of Malaysia.

Malaysia, he said, wanted a balanced investment scenario without overdependence on any particular group of investors. This was a pragmatic approach as it gave the country a stronger hand in negotiations with investors.

The country was also willing to take into cognizance the feelings and views of foreign investors, including those from the United States, in the formulation and implementation of policies that concern foreign investment, he added.

Dr Mahathir, in explaining Malaysia's successful formula for political stability, said ethnic-based political parties in the Barisan Nasional had reassured the various races of their well-

er, had found that it was necessary to train the Bumiputeras to manage wealth and that suitable candidates had to be found for this purpose.

"People will say there is cronyism ala Marcos. We choose certain people because we want the wealth to be in safe hands, with people who will invest it for profit. With the Malaysia Incorporated concept, the Government needs to know the private sector very well.

"Therefore, anyone who gets anything from the Government will be very close to the Government. This is not meant to line the pockets of certain sections of the Government."

On industrialisation, he said the move to heavy in-

A recent book on Malaysia being sold in the United States was "very uncomplimentary about the country just like almost anything about Malaysia that we read in the United States," he said.

Dr Mahathir, in urging the American investors not to believe everything they read about Malaysia, said they should visit the country for a first-hand view of the situation.

Only then would they be able to separate the truth from the lies, he said, adding that those with the benefit of having visited Malaysia should pass the word around.

The author of the recent book said there were too few American investors in Malaysia. This is because of people like him who have been writing adversely about the country.

"I hope you will pass the word that Malaysia and Southeast Asia are good places to invest and that national economies in the region are doing well."

The Prime Minister said Malaysia has no particular interest in ideologies except democracy which had helped accelerate development to the satisfaction of those who had invested in it.

being.

Members of a particular race, therefore, felt that the party representing them would safeguard their interests and that they would not miss out on opportunities available to the other races.

The coalition system of government in Malaysia, he added, was quite different from other countries in that it has been in power since independence.

"Our coalition was in existence before any election in our country. This is different from most other countries where they are formed after an election with the strongest party not being able to form the Government as it does not have a majority and thus has to seek the help of small parties.

"These small parties are invariably extremist groups which make demands which may ultimately lead to the collapse of the government."

On the economy, he said the Second Outline Perspective Plan and the National Development Policy (NDP) had taken over where the New Economic Policy had ended with the accent on the eradication of poverty and non-identification of race by economic function.

The Government, howev-

er, had borne fruit despite expectations to the contrary by some quarters.

The labour situation had also improved with unemployment down to five per cent. Some sectors were even complaining of a lack of skilled manpower, he said.

Dr Mahathir said there was a dire need for infrastructure to cater to the rapid pace of industrialisation and investment. The Government, therefore, needed to increase its revenue to meet the cost of infrastructure like the proposed second airport in Sepang.

"It is possible that we may have to modify tax incentives given to foreign investors to increase revenue. We may tax them a little bit more in future.

"This is not to discourage them. It will, in fact, make it easier for them to import and export goods."

The Consultative Group consists of a select group of chief executive officers from both Malaysia and the US dedicated to increasing trade and investment between both countries.

It was organised by former Secretary of State Dr Henry Kissinger and American International Group Incorporated chairman Maurice R. Greenberg.