

Dr M: We have come a long way in 30 years



Dr Mahathir ... 'we would at least be well on the path to healthy nationhood'

By LEE KAR YEAN

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia needs a policy of sustained growth and equity to build a sound and resilient base for national unity, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

"We have already come a significant way towards redressing imbalances in the last 30 years.

"Hopefully by the year 2020, we would have overcome the problem altogether," the Prime Minister added.

In a dinner address on *A United Malaysian Nation By the Year 2020* organised by Club Harvard last night, he added:

"If we are indeed able to achieve this without unduly sacrificing growth and without undermining the legitimate rights of

everyone, I would say we would have overcome the greatest single obstacle to national unity in this country.

Dr Mahathir said the building of a nation out of diverse people with differing historical, ethnic, linguistic, religious, cultural and geographical backgrounds would simply require time.

The nation would have had 60 years of shared historical experience by the year 2020 of cultivating common values and perceptions, of bonding the people with a common language.

"If we are still not a mature nation by then, we would at least be well on the path to healthy nationhood."

He pointed out that Malaysia was fortunate as its

people, irrespective of their racial origins, had the values, attitudes and behaviour which had helped the country achieve the level of unity and nationhood of today.

"We do have our extremists but by and large, Malaysians are attached to the country, peace-loving, pragmatic, accommodating and respectful of each other's legitimate rights.

"They also cherish freedom, stability and social justice."

He said the nation-building process would need peace and stability to plan and formulate long-term policies to be implemented over an extended period.

Dr Mahathir also stressed the need to redress the socio-economic

imbalances among the various ethnic groups and the various regions in the country.

"If we do not grow we will not have the resources to redress anything," he said.

He said the private sector had an important role to play especially as the Government progressively privatises its operations and deregulates.

"The private sector should get together to consider how it can further enhance its role in this field.

In fact it is in its own interests that it contributes more substantively in this field, as national unity and ethnic harmony are the prerequisites of political stability so vital for good business," he said.

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