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MALAYSIA MUST DEVELOP TO FACE UP TO WESTERN BLOC, SAYS MAHATHIR

Mahathir - bloc

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KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 1 (Bernama) -- Malaysia must become a developed nation to face up to the situation where the Western bloc has a strong influence on the world, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

+If we are a weak and poor nation, we will be unable to act freely to safeguard our integrity, sovereignty and security,+ he said when opening the 21st annual delegates' conference of Parti Gerakan here.

He said the major changes taking place in the world required the people and country to be cautious because the end of the Cold War had brought about a situation where the influence of the Western bloc was overbearing.

+We have seen how these powerful countries have acted against weak nations with no consideration for their sovereignty,+ he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia's desire to become a developed nation was not with the intention of showing that the country was also powerful and strong but +we want Malaysians to enjoy peace and prosperity and decide their future without any pressure+. -- more

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Mahathir - bloc 2 (last) Kuala Lumpur

Dr Mahathir said that to become a developed nation the country's economy must be further strengthened, and this could only be achieved if all communities remained united and worked with more determination.

+It is the responsibility of all of us to contribute towards the effort of making Malaysia a developed nation,+ he said.

He said: +Vision 2020 is not for any one community to strive for. It is not for any one community. Vision 2020 is for Malaysians of all communities.+

Citing the example of Japan and countries almost developed such as South Korea and Taiwan, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia also had the ingredients to achieve developed status.

He said Malaysia was even more capable because while those countries faced a shortage of natural resources including oil, Malaysia had more than enough of them.

Therefore, Dr Mahathir said, the people must continue to consolidate the foundations that had been built together to ensure that the country remained stable and prosperous under the Barisan Nasional administration.

-- Bernama