

PM: Face up to the challenge

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia must become a developed nation to face up to the challenges of the Western bloc which is enjoying its influence on the world, Prime Minister Datuk Seri **Dr Mahathir Mohamad** said yesterday.

Powerful countries had acted against weaker nations with no consideration for their sovereignty, he said when opening the 21st Gerakan delegates conference.

"If we are to remain a weak and poor nation, we will surely be unable to act freely to safeguard our integrity, sovereignty and security," he said.

Dr Mahathir said although the country's political situation was calm and stable, there was a need to be cautious.

"With the end of the Cold War and fall of communist rule in many countries, we are now facing a situation where the Western bloc is controlling the world," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia's wish to become a developed nation was not aimed at showing that it was also powerful and strong.

Instead, the Government wanted Malaysians to enjoy peace and prosperity and "to decide their future without

any pressure.

He said Malaysia had the necessary "ingredients" to achieve the status of a developed country, adding that the country did not lack natural resources including oil.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia's economy must be further strengthened but this "could only be achieved if all the communities remained united and worked with determination.

He attributed the success of South Korea and Taiwan, which were on the verge of becoming developed nations, to the hard work of their people.

Dr Mahathir said the Bari-

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continue its moderate policy which took into account all communities.

He said opposition-ruled Sabah and Kelantan were facing an economic slowdown at a time when the country was enjoying an economic boom.

The Prime Minister blamed it on hasty decisions, citing the proposed implementation of the *hukum hudud* (Islamic penal) in Kelantan as an example.

"All these show that when people who are not experts in a certain field are given authority and responsibility, damage will be done," he said.

Speaking later, Dr Mahathir

criticised the MTUC, saying it only enjoyed the support of a small group of Malaysian workers and depended on foreign unions for support.

He said the foreign unions were only concerned with its members, adding that unemployment in the United States had reached eight per cent and in some countries as high as 10 per cent.

"To ease unemployment, they have to attract more investors to generate growth but their economy is unlikely to grow because of the disruptive attitude of their workers," he added.