

PM: Nation's growth- and stability due to the people

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By ZULKIFLI TALIB

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has attributed Malaysia's political and economic successes to its people, especially a workforce that practises moderation.

"We are fortunate Malaysians are generally non-violent people, are not overly emotional and do not act irresponsibly.

"They have common sense and know how to practise democracy and understand its limitations and weaknesses.

"They are able to accept victory and defeat.

"Malaysians are also not easily influenced by ideological and religious pressures.

"Otherwise? we would not have achieved political stability and a remarkable economic growth," he said when launching the restructured National Joint Councils at a hotel here.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysians had much to be proud of and urged them to continue practising moder-

ation to ensure the country maintained its current pace of development.

He also said a free market economy need not necessarily ensure economic success for a country, an example being Russia which switched from a centrally planned economy to a market-driven one.

"Besides moderation, what is most needed are skills and, most importantly, the right attitude among workers and employers.

"Workers must be able to understand the limitations of the country, their company and Government while employers must be considerate and prepared to distribute profits equally and fairly to their workers," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the workers union in Europe often took industrial action to press their demands for higher wages.

"Employers were forced to give in to their demands but as a result the situation there has worsened with many accompanying problems such as rising costs.

"It has got to the point that what-

ever the workers had fought so hard to achieve became meaningless due to the rising costs.

"The rising costs had resulted in European countries losing their competitive edge and encountering difficulty in selling their products.

"Although workers in Europe are paid high wages, their standard of living is not much better than that of Malaysians."

However, Dr Mahathir said this did not mean that Malaysians should not enjoy wage increases.

"Wages should go up when the country's economy is strong and only if it does not affect our competitive edge.

"Wage increase should also commensurate with increase in productivity," he said.

In this respect, Dr Mahathir commended Malaysian workers for acting responsibly and not being a "demanding" lot.

He thanked workers unions for not seeking a wage increase during the recession period such as in 1985.

On the formation of the three NJCs, Dr Mahathir said this was a result of compromise between the Government and the civil service unions.

He expressed confidence that the NJCs would benefit both the Government and its staff.